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BY CHAS. T. MANNERS.



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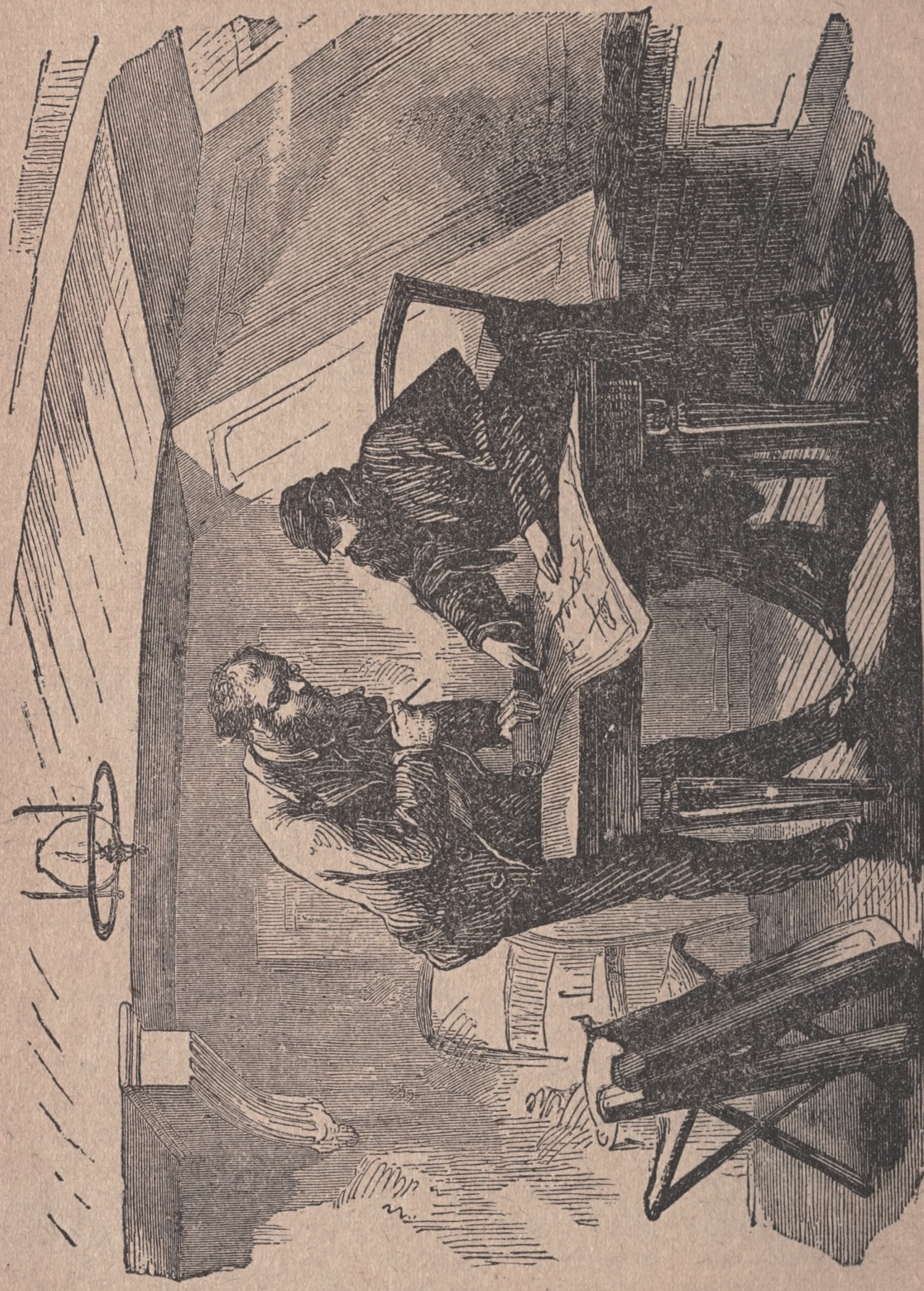
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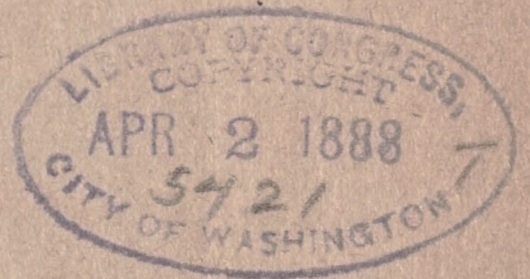
OCTAVIA'S PRIDE;

OR,

THE MISSING WITNESS.

BY

✓
CHARLES T. MANNERS.



NEW YORK:
STREET & SMITH, Publishers,
31 Rose Street.

1888

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OCTAVIA'S PRIDE.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT SHALL HE SAY?

Captain Lodovico Leyard was sitting in the after cabin of the stanch East Indiaman, Sea Foam, which goodly vessel was still lying in the dock, but had received her last consignment of cargo, and would, when the tide changed, haul out and drop down into the river, with her white wings stirring restlessly, impatient for the propitious wind that should bear her away into the ocean.

The skipper of the Sea Foam, for all that the lading and stowing of cargo had gone on smoothly, and was haply well ended, looked dispirited and dreary. The light of a pair of candles, burning cheerily, showed the care-marked face of a man of fifty odd years, with eyes downcast, and mouth more sad than stern. One hand supported his head, and the other held listlessly a pencil, with which he had been figuring at a small account-book, lying open upon the table before him. It was quite evident that Captain Leyard had troubles of his own; and the jolly shipmasters who hailed his arrival in Calcutta, or Manilla, or Canton, as an especial addition to a circle of "good fellows well met," would scarcely have recognized this forlorn personage in the Sea Foam's cabin, as their hearty, hilarious comrade, under a punka, and over curried chicken and mangosteen.

Captain Lo, as he was familiarly known, was, indeed, in that dreary mood which, at one stage or another, from widely varying causes, we all some time know, when it becomes a serious question whether or not this life of ours is at all satisfactory, or worth having.

It seemed a very insignificant trifle to him that the *Sea Foam* was a good sailer, a stanch A No. 1, that many a good seaman would have been overjoyed to command; although sometimes the very remembrance was enough to make him break out into a joyous whistle. There was little comfort in his consciousness of his own seaman's reputation, which long years of good fortune, with few disasters, had established securely. With human ingratitude he forgot what a rich blessing was that strong frame of his—its sound health, its exquisite harmony of thought and action.

"It is hard luck—confounded hard luck!" muttered Captain Lo, springing up from his seat, and beginning to pace the little cabin, "after all my years at sea, to be wanting this miserable sum of money at just this time; to know that ruin and disgrace will come if I do not have it; and to be without a single sail to set, to catch a puff of wind to take me off the breakers!"

And here the skipper of the *Sea Foam* threw down the pencil with an angry frown.

"It's no use to try to figure up possibilities. The owners will advance half the voyage money, but it will take all that to keep the folks at home from starving. A bed-ridden wife, and six children! They'll do well to live on that much. If I had only known that banker was such a cheat and villain, I might have saved more when I was in port, and been more careful; but I thought there was sure to be a full locker at home, and I never dreamed that the investment was not secure, nor that poor Molly was to give out so before her time. And that lad of mine. I was so proud of him, and would have trusted him with the crown jewels, to

think that if something isn't done, they may take him off to prison! Shiver my timbers, if it isn't enough to make a man long to cast off anchor altogether!"

And again Captain Lo went tearing across the cabin floor.

At that moment he heard a hail from the wharf. Some sort of interrogation to which the officer on deck gave an affirmative answer, and an instant after struggling feet sounded above his head, and after them came a quick, light tread which, although it was not familiar, yet caused Captain Lo to lift his drooping head and listen attentively, it was so evident that a person of gentle breeding, of aristocratic culture, was approaching. For the step of a man has as much expression as his face.

The cabin-boy knocked at the inner door.

"A gentleman to see you, sir. A gentleman from the shore."

The visitor entered, and the cabin-boy retreated, closing the door behind him.

Captain Lo brought forward his easy-chair, and bowed courteously, while he examined the new-comer curiously. Which examination, however, gave little satisfaction, except that it assured the captain of the *Sea Foam*, that it was some one palpably disguised, who did not choose to be recognized, or hereafter identified. A long loose cloak of blue cloth, with sleeves that half concealed the hands, enveloped his person; a blue cap, with rolling sides and long visor, covered half the forehead, and a large pair of whiskers and long mustache, both of which, Captain Leyard's keen eye soon settled, were false and put on for the occasion, aided in hiding the rest of the face.

"You wish to see me," said Captain Leyard, half resentfully, for the sudden suggestion had occurred that the man had some connection with his son's defalcation in the busi-

ness office where he was employed. "I do not recognize you, and you have not given me your name."

"You cannot well recognize one upon whom you have never looked before," answered the stranger, coolly, while he took the proffered chair, "and it does not matter about the name of a person whom you will not be likely to meet again."

Captain Lo bowed a little stiffly.

"It is your matter more than mine," he said; "but I am at a loss to know why you have come on board the Sea Foam at this late hour."

"I have a business proposition to lay before you. I will put it in your way to make five hundred pounds with very little trouble to yourself, and if you agree to it, I will advance at once two hundred and fifty pounds, and the rest shall be put into your hands the hour you sail. I come prepared to give you the sum in gold to-night."

"Two hundred and fifty pounds to-night!" ejaculated Captain Lo, in a tone which betrayed what salvation the sum insured.

A grim smile curled the lips under the bushy mustache.

"Five hundred rather, and the whole can be yours to-night, if you insist."

"What do you want of me?" was Captain Lo's brusque demand.

"A very simple thing. I want you to take a passenger in the Sea Foam whose name shall not appear on the ship's papers, who will not be received on board until the anchor is lifted."

Captain Lo drew a long breath.

"That is an easy matter. The owners are indulgent and liberal. I might take my whole family if I chose. They leave all such matters to me."

"And it is not a small one, that family of yours," observed the stranger, with another of those peculiar smiles.

“How do you know? I thought you said I was a stranger to you.”

“Possibly; and yet your circumstances and antecedents might be soon discovered by one who looked into the matter. Understand me, Captain Leyard. I have selected you as the man calculated to serve me honorably and with ability in this matter, and I have quietly investigated into your affairs to make sure how I could offer you attractive inducements to accept my proposition. I know that your little investment at Wiley & Co's has melted away in that rascally affair of theirs; that your wife is bed-ridden, your children an expensive burden, and, worst of all, that the fine young lad, your son, has, very naturally and pardonably under the circumstances, yielded to the temptation to retain some of the money passing through his hands in his employer's business, and that there is great danger of discovery and arrest. Now I bring you a safe and complete antidote for all these evils. Two hundred and fifty pounds will restore the sum purloined, and your son, taught by the lesson to be strictly honest, will retain his good name and his position. The other two hundred and fifty will give your family the comforts they need and all you desire for them.”

“I think,” exclaimed Captain Lo, wiping off the big drops which gathered on his forehead—“blast me if I don't think you are the Evil One himself! You know how to tempt a man so terribly.”

A low, musical laugh rippled out from the heavy mustache and whiskers.

“Not so fast, my good friend, my worthy skipper. I assure you I am hoofless.” And as he spoke he thrust forth a slender foot, clad in an elegant French boot, another sign of aristocratic antecedents, of which Captain Lo was duly cognizant.

“Who is this passenger? An escaped prisoner—a refugee from justice?”

“On the contrary, an exceedingly quiet and humble and unknown individual. You are perfectly safe, sir. The law cannot touch you in the matter. I engage passage to-night for a person, and you accept my terms. If the person is brought hither unconscious of the transaction, that is my responsibility, and I risk the penalty. You see that I accept it, and I further put it out of your power to compromise me, or to be injured yourself, by keeping myself unknown to you.”

“Then my passenger is an unwilling one?” demanded the master of the *Sea Foam*, a little uneasy still.

“I cannot say whether the voyage will be agreeable or not, because it is precisely this: you see, where I am safe to be frank, I am gladly so. The person will be entirely unconscious of the proposed change; will drink some drugged coffee, go to sleep, and waken on board the *Sea Foam*, standing well out to sea.”

“Bless my stars! This is exceedingly strange!” ejaculated Captain Lo, mopping away again at his forehead.

“It is an adventure rather out of the common line, I admit,” was the calm rejoinder, in those musically modulated tones.

And the speaker rubbed his hands together, whether nervously or contentedly, could scarcely be determined. The movement, however, disturbed the loose sleeve of the cloak, and revealed more than had hitherto been allowed. Captain Lo's lynx eye caught the glitter of a seal ring, and half mastered the coat of arms carved upon it. The stranger noticed his observant eye, glanced down at the slender, delicately white hands, and, biting his lips in vexation, he slipped off the ring hastily, and dropped it into the cloak-pocket.

“It is the wisest thing for you to look in the opposite

direction," said he, a little angrily. "If any trouble comes out of this affair from the shore, I presume you won't care to be dragged into it."

Captain Lo sighed lugubriously.

"If I could be assured there was no wrong about it," he began, and then, suddenly struck by a new idea, he asked, anxiously: "But what am I to do with the passenger when I arrive in port?"

"I have been waiting for you to make such an inquiry," was the composed reply. "Your passenger is not to arrive at all in the port."

"You ask me to commit murder? Begone, sir. I am not a tool for such a deed!" vociferated the master of the Sea Foam.

"Now again you jump at your own conclusions. I do not intend that any harm shall come to your passenger—who will enjoy a very romantic and novel experience. Understand me: this person for a little time will be in my way; of course it is so, or I should not take all this pains and expense to get up an impromptu voyage for the person's express benefit. I mean to have a clear path for the time I desire, and if you do not consent, I can find plenty less scrupulous shipmasters who will; but when I can, I prefer to deal with an honorable man. Besides, I thought my five hundred pounds would do most good in your case. If you decline the business, I may as well spare the waste of time and words."

He rose as he spoke, and made a movement toward the door.

Poor, perturbed, half-distracted Captain Lo stretched out his hands.

"Stay; if I can be assured the passenger is to come to no harm, I will consent."

"I have already given that assurance," returned his mysterious visitor, haughtily. "I am no murderer, man!"

It was Captain Leyard's turn to speak coaxingly and meekly. What if he had lost this wonderful chance to extricate himself from his troubles?"

"Will you be good enough to give me a clear statement of what you require? I promise not to interrupt you again," he said.

The stranger condescended to resume his seat.

"Bring me your charts of the N. and S. Atlantic," said he. "I want to see the course you expect to make."

The skipper opened his chart-box, and spread out the desired maps upon the table.

The courses of previous voyages were marked out upon it in pencil. The unknown visitor followed them with interest.

Presently he put his finger upon a little island below the equator, a tiny speck in the great space around it.

"See!" said he, "that little island of Trinidad. Do you know anything about it?"

"Not much. I was never there, though, on the homeward voyage, I almost always make it out. It is only a few miles of land, and uninhabited."

"Exactly. I suppose if you were a whaler you would know more about it. I am told its water is remarkably pure, and that the whaling ships take pains to fill up their barrels there, and make frequent visits to the tiny oasis. It is in a tropic climate, so there can be no suffering from the inclemency of the weather. Besides, an old sailor told me he helped to build a comfortable little hut, and planted such of our vegetables as would thrive. It is a most eligible site. Captain Leyard, your passenger is booked for Trinidad.

The captain opened his eyes, but had grown wise enough to bridle his tongue.

"Well, sir, of course that person is willing," was all he said.

"My dear captain, I thought I had made you understand

that the person's desires and opinions are not to be considered. You are not the man I take you to be, if you cannot invent an excuse to go a little out of your track to visit Trinidad, and having anchored off the island, surely common curiosity will induce your passenger to go ashore, and you may manage, as you choose, to make it seem an accident, or deliberate purpose, but your boat must slip back to the ship, and leave the passenger to a few weeks', or days', solitude, whichever the case may be. You can see for yourself that no real harm is intended. I would recommend you to leave, accidentally, a bag of provisions, and a few books which I will send aboard, with a trunk of wearing apparel for your passenger. Now, sir, will you give me your word of honor to do this thing, because I am willing to abide by that, though I have taken pains to secure the proofs of this little affair of your son's, to hold as security to fulfill your part of the contract?"

"Yes; I will do it," said Captain Lo.

"Very well. Now let us talk about the rest. Your passenger will naturally be surprised and disturbed upon discovering that this voyage has been so unconsciously undertaken, and will demand of you an explanation. What are you going to say?"

"Upon my word, I don't know what I could say," replied the skipper, frankly.

"I will tell you, then. You are just to tell the truth, although not exactly the *whole* truth. Answer frankly that it is all a puzzle. Say that a stranger—you can describe what you see—came and engaged and paid for a passage, and that you received what came, and know no further."

"I will do it," repeated the captain of the Sea Foam, nodding his head energetically, and feeling his heart lighten as he heard the chink of the gold in the bag the stranger drew forth."

"Perform your part faithfully, and the matter for you

ends here. Though you met me face to face to-morrow, you would not recognize me. You will find it impossible to track me out. But you will have the money, and your boy will be saved. Fail me, or seek in any way to circumvent this project, after you sail from London, and be sure my vengeance will find you out."

"I shall not fail you. I really see no great harm in the affair," answered Captain Lo.

"And now when do you sail? Are you cleared yet?"

"We shall clear to-morrow, and go out into the river, and get down out to sea as speedily as possible."

The stranger was silent a moment, evidently meditating. Then he looked up, and gave Captain Lo the first full glimpse of a pair of pale blue eyes. He dropped them again quickly, as though aware that he had been imprudent.

"Well," said he, "I will send you a note to-morrow morning, telling you at just what hour after dark, and at what point on the river below, you may expect a boat to bring you the passenger. You will be prepared to take as quickly as possible from the curious gaze of your crew the passenger you may call sick, but whom you will know to be under the effects of a powerful narcotic. And here is your five hundred dollars. I have concluded to give it all to you to-night, warning you that any withdrawal on your part will be promptly retaliated upon your son. And now I will take leave, wishing you a prosperous voyage and a safe riddance of your passenger. Good-night, sir."

"Good-night," answered Captain Lodovico, with the air of a man in a dream, and allowed his visitor to depart, as he had arrived, unattended to the wharf.

He fell to counting the gold eagerly as soon as he turned the key in the cabin-door, and in an hour afterward, with the bag under his arm, the master of the Sea Foam presented himself in the midst of his astonished and overjoyed family. The sorrowful disgrace of the family honor was

covered over; the wrong repaired, and the rest of the family made comfortable by the replenishment of the collapsed purse. Captain Leyard said his good-by with a very much lightened heart, and went off to the Sea Foam hopefully, and, in the bustle and confusion of getting off, forgot his uneasy dread of the arrival on board to be expected when they were down at the mouth of the Thames.

But as they neared the sea, it was noticeable how his jubilant spirits fell away. His officers wondered what it could mean, and when at last, in a hasty, confused way, he informed them there was to be a passenger, they said aside to each other:

“The old man is obliged to take somebody he doesn't like, and now we shall have him in a fret all the passage.”

One asked carelessly, as he turned away:

“It is a male passenger, of course, sir.”

“Thunder and blixen!” ejaculated the skipper of the Sea Foam, and that was all the answer they got.

But Captain Lo began looking dismally around him as soon as he was gone.

“Is it a man? The Evil One is in it, if it is not. I never thought to ask, and I remember now there was nothing said for me to judge by. A *person*, a person; hang the person! What if it should be a woman? And I've used his money and I'm bound to fulfill my part of the contract. I believe there were hoofs, after all, inside those French boots.”

He was not left long in doubt.

Punctually, as soon as darkness and a drizzling mist concealed movements, they were hailed by a boat alongside, and Captain Leyard received from the stout arms of a man wrapped in an oil-skin coat, with a similar hood drawn almost over his face, a light, stirless figure, wrapped about in a heavy plaid shawl.

Muttering a hasty and confused explanation to his first officer, who assisted in taking two heavy trunks on board,

that the passenger was sick, Captain Lo hurried, with his burden, to the state-room off his own, and hastily unwrapped the shawl.

It was intense relief to catch the first glimpse of a black coat sleeve and a modest gray waistcoat; but when his eye came to the pale, set face, Captain Lo's heart was deeply touched. It was so fair, and sweet, and innocent! Carved in marble, it would have passed for a perfect Ganymede, or Hyperion, or Narcissus. The hair curled in short, shiny, brown rings, from above the broad, full forehead; the long, silky eyelashes lying on the proud, pallid cheeks; and the wistful pout of the sweet lips had an expression in them which reminded Captain Lo of his own children, when, sometimes, on his home visits, he had hung entranced over their sleeping innocence.

"Bless my soul!" muttered the captain, "what an exceedingly handsome boy! What has he done, I wonder, to bring this about? I shall have to steel my heart to part with him, I fancy, much more to leave him alone on that lonely island."

And, forgetting his affairs on deck, the tender-hearted seaman hung over the stirless figure, fascinated by its unusual grace and beauty.

The narcotic held its powerful sway, and a cannon, fired there in the little cabin, would not have roused the heavy sleeper.

Captain Lo fixed the head more comfortably upon the pillow, tucked the hands (how small and elegantly formed they were) under the coverlet, and, closing the state-room door, went back to the deck reluctantly.

The boat and its crew had already vanished into the darkness from which it had come. He saw the curious faces of his officers, and knew that some explanation was expected, if not necessary; but he kept moodily by himself. The five hundred pounds weighted down his conscience now with

tenfold oppressiveness. And, when the boy woke up, this handsome, spiritual-looking boy, who had so unconsciously appealed to the tenderest sentiments of his nature, to find himself amid strangers, borne swiftly away to sea, what was he, Captain Lo Leyard, going to say to him?

CHAPTER II.

BEGGARY AND RUIN!

Something like a week previous to that eventing, when the master of the *Sea Foam* was startled by his mysterious visitor's appearance, there was an affecting scene in a stately mansion, whose turreted roof and noble elms crowned so conspicuously, as to be seen miles away, one of the graceful Surrey hills.

The soft evening air crept through the open windows of a sick-chamber, stirring the heavy brocade curtains into a rustle which seemed to mimic the whispering of the leaves on the mammoth limbs of the elms without, which, following the avenue, came at this wing almost to the house-steps.

No cool touch came refreshingly to the fevered forehead of the sufferer who lay on the grand old couch, amid its purple and fine linen, tossing restlessly to and fro. The nurse—silent, but watchful and attentive—rose from her seat at the foot of the cumbrous carving of the old-style bedstead, and came closer, as a deeper groan and an impatient ejaculation broke the stillness of the sick-room.

“Do you wish anything, sir?” she asked, in respectful and somewhat nervous tones.

“Of course I do. I wish a great deal,” was the pettish reply. “In the first place I wish this cursed pain, knawing and tearing at my vitals, to be sent off at once. And then I wish to be cool and comfortable, and you persist in keep-

ing me shut up and close. If that breeze could get in to me it would be a relief in itself."

The nurse, with a patient smile of resignation to the peevishness of an irritable nature, as well as to the nervousness of illness, went to the windows and looped the damask drapery as far back as possible. And the sweet, cool air fluttered the gray locks from the full, pallid forehead of the invalid at its own fitful will. He raised himself on his elbow and looked out longingly.

"Carry off that light," said he, in a moment after, frowning a glance toward the little silver nurse-lamp, which shed a faint glare from the marble slab of the chimney-piece.

It was removed, and the room left to the tender gloom of a star-lighted sky.

The old man, chafing so angrily against the decree which held him to a bed of sickness, sat up against pillows, supporting himself by one trembling arm, and stared out wildly, fiercely, yearningly.

How beautiful it looked to him. The narrow glimpse of clear sky studded brightly with stars that shimmered and shone upon him with a solemn glory which startled and awed him, and the branching boughs of elms which stirred fearlessly at the lightest breath of the breeze. What a priceless inheritance it would be to be sent out again into this outward world with health and strength for his companions. How insignificant looked all other possessions, however much he had hitherto prized them.

General Geoffrey Wainwright, the stern, haughty old aristocrat, looking out from that sick-room, face to face with those solemn stars, felt all the boasted trappings of circumstances, and station, and fortune dropping off from him; shuddered, writhed, agonized, but could not escape from seeing that at last he was only a naked soul, like that of the veriest plowman or beggar in the street, drifting—ah, so surely and swiftly with the ebbing tide—whither?

He groaned again and fell back upon the pillow.

Stern, haughty old man, though his heart was trembling in abject terror and horror, he betrayed nothing but his cold, hard tone, when he answered the nurse, who hurried forward anxiously.

"You are worse, sir. There is too much air for you, and you have caught a chill. Let me close the windows."

"Yes, shut them, and drop the curtains."

He wanted to shut out those solemn, starry eyes looking down from the cloudless skies, but they looked upon him still. He could not throw off the remembrance even after the nurse brought back the light, and at his request brightened the wick.

He tossed from side to side and groaned again.

"You had better have an opiate, sir," ventured the nurse.

"I suppose, but not yet, not until my daughter comes. It is surely time for the train to arrive. That idiot Thomas will drive as if to a funeral, I'll be bound. Tell me the time now, Willis."

"Half-past eight, sir."

"It must be a mistake. The watch has stopped. You told me it was eight two hours ago."

"It is all right, sir. The time seems long to you."

And the nurse turned to the little table and began noiselessly arranging the vials there.

"Long? Ay, longer than many a day has been," he muttered, drearily, "and yet what is left to me will slip off too soon."

"Where is Felix?" he broke out again a moment after.

"At least he might come and talk to me."

"He went with the carriage to meet Miss Wainwright, sir. You know you were tired when he came this afternoon, and wouldn't talk with him."

"But that is no sign I couldn't talk with him this evening. Besides he began to talk business, and this law suit—

curse it. I am sick enough thinking about it, without gossiping over it like an old woman," he muttered, querulously, plaiting the linen sheet in his thin, blue fingers.

Mrs. Willis opened her eyes a little.

General Wainwright had never forgotten himself quite so much before, as to give her a hint of the cause of his mental disquiet. She had heard something about a law suit just entered in the courts, "*Middleton vs. Wainwright*," but being a stranger in that part of the country, she had not interested herself enough to inquire into the case. She said to herself when the general's valet came to relieve her for the night, she would ask the housekeeper for an explanation.

Just then there came to the chamber the sound of wheels crunching along the graveled avenue.

"Octavia has come!" cried out the invalid, in an eager, brightened tone. "Send her to me at once."

Mrs. Willis gave the order through the speaking-tube, and came back to the bedside.

"Another light, Willis," continued the general, in a still more animated voice. "Have it bright and pleasant as possible when Miss Wainwright comes here. Remember this is an order, not for this time alone, but for that when I can no longer give directions, if such should ever be the case. Always have it as cheerful as possible when my beautiful Octavia comes to see her sick father. Bring in those flowers from the dressing-room, and see if my hair is tumbled."

You would have almost fancied by the eagerness of his looks that it was a lady-love instead of his daughter who was coming to see him. A warm smile kindled on the haggard face as he heard the light but firm step crossing the corridor. He stretched out both hands as the door swung open, and Miss Wainwright, with a step which was queenly

in its tread, came gracefully across the carpet to the bedside.

“Octavia, my darling!”

“Dear father, I hope you are comfortable to-night;” and bending from her stately height, she put two shapely white hands into his.

She was a large but admirably proportioned woman, this Octavia Wainwright, with a dazzling complexion, pearly white and soft pink blending so exquisitely as to defy the imitation of art. Her hair, of which there seemed so luxuriant a mass it almost looked too weighty for the classical head, was of a pale hue, neither brown nor red, nor yet, as the poets tell, of spun gold; but when the light glanced across it, it seemed to imprison myriad sunbeams whose gleaming beauty was rarer than that of gold. The features were regular, but might have seemed heavy accompanied by any other figure. Upon hers the face, with its large, grave eyes whose blue was scarcely so deep as that of the violet, and its singularly vivid scarlet lips, seemed the only proper and possible complement. She was called everywhere a magnificent woman; no one ever questioned her right to reign queen and belle wherever she chose to venture. That this grand and stately creature should be the idol of General Wainwright's heart was scarcely strange, nor could any one marvel that he was ready to lavish upon her every luxury and costly adornment which lay within his power.

“My darling!” said he again, fondling the white hands which rested in his, “it has seemed so long to me while you were away. I hoped that you would arrive at noon.”

“I could not help it, dear papa. Those tiresome lawyers kept me.”

“What! Screw & Scattergood? Did they send for you? I did not know that.”

There was again a gloomy cloud on his forehead, an uneasy gleam of his eye.

Octavia glanced lightly toward the nurse, and went over to the table where she stood, asking in a low voice:

"How do you find your patient to-night, Mrs. Willis? Has it been a comfortable day?"

"Tolerably so, Miss Wainwright; rather restless toward night, though. I think he had better have an opiate to-night."

"I should judge so. Now you may go out a few moments, giving Philippe his directions for the night. I will remain with my father until you return."

This was said, not in a haughty or imperious way, but still in a voice that Mrs. Willis would no more have ventured to dispute than she would have disobeyed a mandate from the queen.

And so the sick-room was left to the father and daughter. Miss Wainwright shook out the folds of her dress, which was made of some glossy gray fabric, turned around the vase of flowers brought to the stand especially for her visit, and then sank softly into the chair close to the bedside.

The sick man watched her uneasily.

"You have something to say to me, Octavia. Some disagreeable thing from those lawyers. Do not be afraid, darling, to speak plainly."

"Well, really, dear papa, I suppose I ought to tell you, but I do not want to disturb your mind. However, Willis says you must have an opiate anyway, and that will calm you shortly if you get excited. My summons this morning came from Screw & Scattergood, and of course concerned this odious law suit."

She paused, glancing questioningly into his face. He bit his lips impatiently, but otherwise kept his composure.

"Middleton vs. Wainwright. Yes, concerning this accursed law suit; go on, Octavia," muttered he.

"You see they did not like to come to you for advice, now you are ill, and a new development is disturbing them."

General Wainwright caught his breath in a stifled sort of gasp.

“A new development! Confound their stupidity! It was their business to prevent any new developments. I gave them instructions for all exigencies, and put them in possession of all the facts. What business had they to trouble you, a lady, with this insolent suit of those beggarly Middletones?”

“Dear papa, you mustn’t abuse the lawyers. They wrote asking me if it was safe to trouble you, and I told them no, it must not be done on any account. Then they wrote again, asking if I had any confidential family adviser, and I consulted with Felix, and concluded to go myself and try to have sense enough to understand these troublesome law matters. And I have had this long interview with them to-day, and am almost as much perplexed as they. So, after all, you see we must come to you.”

“Well, well, I am sorry you have meddled with it. You ought to be spared the very thought of such perplexities, my beautiful Octavia.”

She shook her head with a slow, grave smile on the vividly crimson lips.

“Nay, papa, you do not quite understand me, for all you love me so. I am not a doll to be shielded from exposure lest my graces shall be ruined. I am more like yourself. I have strength, energy, ability to act promptly and fearlessly if an emergency comes. I think now that I have mastered this case as well as Felix has done. And some day I shall scold you that cheated me into believing it a trivial affair. I think I should make a very decent lawyer.”

“You are capable of anything you undertake,” answered he, fondly. “I never doubted that, my Octavia.”

“Papa,” said Miss Wainwright, taking one of his chilly hands into her soft, warm clasp, but fixing those wide, blue

eyes penetratingly upon his face, "did you ever hear of such a person as Gustavus Wainright?"

Despite his best efforts to appear cool and unembarrassed before this idol of his heart, the general's jaw dropped, and the voice which answered faltered miserably.

"Certainly, Octavia; he was my father's cousin. He died when a young man, out in India, in her majesty's service."

"Your father's cousin, the *elder* brother's son?" questioned the beautiful Octavia, the lustrous eyes still keen and watchful of every change in his face.

"Yes, I believe so. I think his father was the elder; but what matter since he died a young man without family?"

"Had he lived he would have received all this great property of ours," continued Octavia, musingly. "Your father would have remained poor, and you would have been poor now, and I—a poor man's poorer daughter."

A shudder ran through the stately frame.

"But it did not happen so. He did not live," said the general, in as impatient a voice as he ever used to her.

"So Screw & Scattergood assured me, but it seems the Middletons affirm that he did not die without heirs. They claim to be of his direct descent."

"The Middletons are arrant cheats, and brazen impostors," exclaimed the general, fiercely, rising up from his pillow with a sullen glow on his face, and then falling back with a stifled groan. "I will fight them, inch by inch."

"What an endless amount of time and search has been given to this affair! I had no idea it was so laborious a life, that of a detective. Mr. Scattergood showed me the result of so many months searching. It quite turned my head to try to follow the facts eliminated—marriages recorded here, births there, deaths in another place, and the curious way that members of obscure families drift away and are lost

sight of," pursued Miss Wainwriht, in the same meditative tone of voice.

The sick man turned uneasily upon his pillow. She stroked his hand with those light, caressing fingers of hers.

"I have been going over the whole history. I looked through that yellow package of letters, and the note-books, and as I came along in the railway carriage, I made out such a story as will always stay by me. See if I am right about it, papa. I would like you to set me right, if I have taken any wrong impressions. Lie down on the pillow—there, get an easy posture and let me have your hand. Dear papa, you must take some of the coolness from mine into those dry, hot fingers. Now, shall I commence?"

He turned his face so that he could feast his eyes upon her animated countenance, and with a sigh of forced content, resigned himself to listen.

The same stately composure was in her demeanor that graced it when she was presented at the Duchess of G——'s latest reception. A slow smile quivered across the full red lips. The pale blue eyes deepened beneath their glow of kindling interest.

"I shall begin, like the story-makers. Once upon a time in Hartfordshire, papa, there was a strange, fierce-tempered, but somehow singularly fascinating man. (You know how I have always hung admiringly over his portrait in the old gallery my beau-ideal of a hero, who would have ability to command as well as charm me.) And this dark, wild man fell in love with a little blue-eyed girl, sweet and fair as a violet and quite as frail. A little girl, who, of course, had other lovers, in fact she was already engaged when he found her. But what account was that to one of his vehement, imperious nature? Of course he won her away and married her, laughing to scorn the discarded lover's threat of vengeance. But the malediction seemed to work. The young wife died when her boy-babe opened to the light a

pair of eyes, dark, and as full of unfathomable splendors as his father's. And the bereaved husband, like a fierce, wild animal hiding in his lair, shut himself out from the world, and devoted himself to his child, pouring out upon him all the passionate love of his heart. They seem to have loved each other with the tender devotion of women, and one would judge also with something of a woman's jealousy. I read some of those letters with the tears dripping over my cheeks, for all I sat in that musty old office of Screw & Scattergood. They were so pathetic and touching. Now, that fierce, furious old man was bound up in the life of the young fellow at college, living his joys over at home, and fiercely resenting the smallest annoyance that assailed him. And the son seemed to enjoy so much, telling over his cheering stories, to brighten the dreariness of that secluded home. Alack, my father, it preaches more than many a pulpit sermon, this going over letters of dead and gone families, and sifting out their story!"

Octavia's luminous eyes were softened by a little veil of mist. She bent down and touched her red lips to the thin hand she held.

"Dear father, how dreadful it would be if you and I, who love each other as devotedly as they seemed to do, should, like young Arthur and old Hugh Wainwright, fall into such a deadly quarrel."

"My precious one, my pride, my joy!" cried out the general, "that would be impossible. Is there anything I would deny you if it lay in my power to give it?"

"I judge not; you have always been too lavish, you generous papa. But this Wainwright pride is an inexorable master. Young Arthur must have inherited his mother's gentle nature, or he would never have contemplated that *mesalliance* which turned his father's love to gall. Was there ever anything so stern and cutting as that letter of dismissal, wherein Hugh Wainwright pronounces his bitter

curse upon the son he has loved so much? I do not wonder it drove poor Arthur across the seas to die of a broken heart, hiding from all the world his name and lineage. And yet I could read, by every line, that the old father's heart also was pierced through and through, and what he thought was stony impassiveness, must have been only the stunned insensibility of the first shock."

There was a long, quivering sigh from the general's pillow.

Miss Wainwright looked at him anxiously.

"I am tiring you," said she. "I must hasten to be through my story. Old Hugh Wainwright disinherited his son, and hunted up his nearest relatives to look for an heir to his vast and increasing possessions. There was one George Wainwright, a second cousin, who had two sons, Gustavus and Geoffrey, likely lads both of them, so old Hugh's will declares. To the elder of these he bequeathed his whole property; but, in case of this Gustavus' death before the decease of the testator, the same was to descend to Geoffrey Wainwright, the brother of Gustavus. The heart of old Hugh must have been sore; for he would not have these young men near him, and carefully concealed from them the nature of his will. This accounts for the journey of Gustavus, who seemed to be of a roving disposition, for he strayed off presently to India, and thence to Australia. So that when Hugh Wainwright died, and the contents of the will were made known, there was great inquiry for Gustavus, and no little trouble and expense in hunting him out in all sorts of outlandish places. It seemed to be settled, however, that he had led a bushranger's life, and died, without dreaming of his claim to this princely estate, somewhere in those Australian wilds. That was the impression, and it certainly must have been very well sustained; for Geoffrey, your father, took undisputed possession, notwithstanding a codicil was added to old Hugh's will, the very day before he

died, giving back the property to its rightful claimant, or his heirs, if such could be found. But Arthur's death was proved beyond any questioning. There is quite a pile of India letters giving an account of it, and an interesting glimpse of his life, after the rupture between him and his father. He seems to have broken down in spirits and character, but to have retained that womanly tenderness of heart which struck me so forcibly in his college letters to his father. I have tried to imagine the poor fellow's life. Did you notice his comrade's description of the boy who followed him everywhere he went, and of whom he was so loving and tender? The fate of this lad seems to have weighed heavily on Arthur's mind at his death-bed; for, do you remember, his friends say he made him promise to come and hear a little story about him, and begged that he would carry a letter commending the lad to his father's care when he (Arthur) should be gone. But he died suddenly, rupturing a blood-vessel, and the letter was never written, and when Arthur was dead the lad fled away and disappeared. Did you give much thought to this, papa?"

"No, Octavia, I scarcely remember the circumstance at all."

"Neither did Screw & Scattergood, but it stays with me very forcibly. Well, to come back to our case. After your father is dead, and you have been all this time in undisturbed possession, these Middletons rise up and claim to be legal children of Gustavus Wainwright, who, as they aver, changed his name to Middleton on marrying the heiress of one Captain Robert Middleton, a wealthy land-owner in Australia, and they claim to be the rightful owners of this property. Dear papa, it was very foolish in you to try to hide this from me, because I must have found it out sometime."

She smiled upon him tranquilly, but her eyes glittered a little feverishly.

“Because it is all nonsense, my darling; utter nonsense. They are impostors. Didn’t Screw or Scattergood tell you they could not even prove the marriage of their parties? Supposing that Gustavus Wainwright and Augustus Middleton were really one and the same, they have no proof positive, such as the law requires, that he married Jane Middleton. They have no certificate, no church record,” cried the general, rising up again from the pillow, a round spot of feverish red gathering on his sallow cheek.

“Father,” asked Octavia, dropping her voice a little, “if they should succeed in the suit; if this property of old Hugh Wainwright’s were taken away from us, what should we have left—you and I——”

“Beggary and ruin!” was the hoarse reply.

Miss Wainwright withdrew the shapely white hands from his and clasped them together. The full, red lips straightened also, and took on a firm, set look, which, for all the unlikeness of tint and form, was singularly a counterpart of the general’s grim, square jaw.

“Well,” said she, “as I told you before, Screw & Scattergood are a little disturbed by a new development. You are aware that there is a detective secretly watching all the Middleton movements. They have got hold of an old, broken-down East India merchant, and he, Screw & Scattergood say, insists that he knew all about Gustavus Wainwright’s change of name, and was present at his marriage. He says his father was a captain in the regiment in which Arthur Wainwright served as a lieutenant; that he, himself a young lad, was warmly attached to this Arthur. He tells, very accurately, the date of Gustavus Wainwright’s appearance in India, who, it seems, sought his cousin out the moment he arrived. He knew just when he left for Australia, and he and his father went out to Australia, in response to the invitation of Gustavus, two years after Arthur’s death, and were fortunately just in time to be present

at the wedding. This, Screw & Scattergood have got out of the old man, by pretending to be agents for the Middletons, and I think they are pretty well convinced of the worth of his testimony to the opposite side. He is seventy-one years old, and remarkably preserved in all his faculties. They say he behaves very shrewdly, and hints of holding some still undeveloped secret, and sticks stoutly for a generous reward, inasmuch as you would be likely to give twice as much to silence him."

"What is the man's name?" asked General Wainwright, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, turning his face a little away from the glance of that keen blue eye.

"Mathew Merle," answered Octavia, bending over to smooth out the coverlet, and thus made aware of the ghastly pallor which swept over the averted countenance.

The invalid dropped heavily to his pillow.

"I am so sorry to disturb you, dear papa; but you see that this odious affair gives me no alternative. Screw & Scattergood ask for immediate instructions."

"They must ruin that man's testimony somehow. Tell them no cost need to alarm them," gasped the general.

"You think, then, that Gustavus Wainwright really knew such a person as Mathew Merle?"

"The letter mentions him," moaned her father, flinging up his arms to his head, as if some remembrance tortured him.

She rose promptly.

"You must not talk any more to-night. Leave the affair to me. With Screw & Scattergood's help, I will manage it."

"To you—to you—a woman—a carefully guarded pet like you, my Octavia!" said he, mournfully.

She smiled proudly.

"Yes, I am a woman, but none the less capable for that. Have you never seen, my father, that I possess a resolute and determined spirit, like your own? Come, you must

fret no more over it. I will ring for Willis, and you shall have the opiate."

He yielded quietly.

She saw him take the opiate, herself fixed the pillows comfortably, and, kissing him for good-night, she glided away out of the chamber, as calm, and fair, and regally graceful, as when she entered.

CHAPTER III.

"YOU SHALL REPENT THAT SPEECH!"

"You have no more spirit than a fly, Maurice Middleton. If you were my daughter I should not mind. We expect women to be weak, and cowardly, and hesitating, but in a man, and a strong young fellow like you—bah! I am ashamed of my son."

The tone was one of deep disgust, and it was scarcely strange the listener's cheek flushed beneath it.

Nevertheless, the young man answered calmly:

"I beg your pardon, father, but you have no right to apply either of those epithets to me. Wait until circumstances have tried me before you call me weak or cowardly."

"But you have no ambition. See how you would drop out of this affair, would relinquish this suit. I can scarcely drive you into it," returned the father, Mr. John Middleton, a sharp-featured, wiry-framed little man, who was snapping the blade of his penknife to and fro, and shifting uneasily in his seat.

"That is true. I don't exactly know why, but I have taken a great antipathy to the whole affair. Why should we three men set ourselves to hunting and scraping up evidence of dead and gone people, to oust out from a prop-

erty they have possessed all their lives, a feeble old man and a delicate, refined young lady? If my mother were alive, or we had sisters, it would be different. There would seem to be then some show of justice. But for three men like you, and Felix, and myself, I confess I can't make it seem anything but abominable."

"Foolish boy! Won't you and Felix marry? And then where is the fine fortune you will need to come from?"

The clear, ingenuous face sparkled over with a mischievous smile, and the manly shoulders were shrugged impatiently.

"Time enough to think of that, father, when Felix and I have received hint of such a destiny."

"And you would let this great fortune, which was my father's right, slip away from us? I have no patience with you, Maurice. It is time you threw aside these absurd dreams of yours and became a practical man, alive to the duties of the day and hour. I shall no longer humor your vagaries. You must be more of a man, or I shall disown you."

"Disinherit me from this Wainwright fortune, you mean? Upon my soul, I am willing."

"Thank Heaven, Felix has some sense! You do not find Felix talking in this fashion. He urges me to bring forward all possible convincing testimony."

"Why don't Felix come and attend to the business himself? I'm sure I don't understand his movements at all. He has never taken us to his residence or his place of business since we have arrived in town. We know nothing whatever of his movements, and when he comes to us, I declare it seems to me he is all the time afraid he will be seen by some one. I must own, father, that these three years of absence have not improved Felix, according to my mind. He looks like a man about something of which he is ashamed."

"Another of your absurdities!" was the elder gentleman's angry retort. "Felix understands what he is about, and I am fully acquainted with his affairs. So you may set your mind at rest there. I only wish I were half as well satisfied with your behavior."

The handsome, clear-eyed young fellow shrugged his shoulders and gave a comical grimace.

"I wish, then, you would put this obnoxious affair into the hands of Felix. It is more to his taste, you admit. Why not give him the management?"

"Felix really does have the management," answered Mr. Middleton, meditatively, "only he does not like to have it appear so. He does not want them to mistrust yet that he has any connection with us."

"Ha!" exclaimed Maurice; "so my vague conjectures prove true! Mr. Felix Middleton does not wish it known that his father and brother are in town. Humph! I trust my affairs will never be in such a 'satisfactory' state that I am ashamed to own my relatives. I am sure I shall never be willing to compromise my own honor so much as to be willing to take any management which cannot be known to all the word."

"Absurd, quixotic boy! I cannot imagine how you came to be so unlike your brother, nor where you acquired such weak and silly ideas."

The soft hazel eye took on a sudden flash; the lip curled haughtily.

"Father! father! let me always keep such weakness and silliness! Mayhap the time will come when I can show you what is true strength and wisdom. Mayhap you will be able to test your two sons, and find out which is wanting. Mayhap——"

But here he broke off with a light laugh, and shook away the sudden fire of emotion which had come over him.

"Pshaw! it is absurd in me to quarrel about this thing.

We might talk forever, and neither could change the other's views. You know I have my own plans for the future, and that I deferred them to come and assist you here, according to your earnest request. Upon my word, father, I think I have got beyond my usefulness here. That old man is a villain, and will play you false, take my word for it."

"Let him be a villain; it does not matter to me, so that I get this testimony out of him," was the crusty reply.

"But what is a villain's testimony worth? I tell you he has a sardonic smile which assures me he means to turn upon you some way."

"How can he do that? Let him but give his testimony on oath that Gustavus Wainwright took the name of Augustus Middleton when he married Captain Robert's daughter, and that the ceremony was a legal one, and he may turn as much and as often as he pleases. I shall be safely established as the heir of the Wainwright property."

"And that poor old man, and the young lady?" said Maurice Middleton, sorrowfully. "Father! father! what do we three men want of riches? Leave the poor Wainwrights undisturbed, I beg of you!"

"Right is right. Why should I be defrauded of my father's due? And you may spare your sympathy for the young lady. Felix will look after her welfare. He seems very much in love with her."

"And here he comes. I will leave you to discuss the subject, for I presume the conversation will entirely concern the case of Middleton vs. Wainwright, and will spare him any trepidation on my account."

As he spoke he crossed the room toward a door opposite that upon whose threshold appeared a rather fine-looking, well-dressed gentleman, some half a dozen years older than Maurice.

The elder Mr. Middleton advanced to meet the newcomer, with a smile of eager welcome.

"So you have come again, Felix? I am thankful to see you. I want to ask your advice about this Mathew Merle. He is rather hard to manage, and demands an extravagant price, besides threatening to walk over to the other party."

"I know, I know," said Felix, snapping angrily a pair of rather small, but piercing gray eyes. "I doubted your ability to cope with him, and I went to see him myself. He is as wily as an old fox, and took care not to commit himself in any way. But he means mischief."

"I have been telling father that same thing," observed Maurice, with his hand on the door. "You'd better help me out with the rest of the advice. I tell him to drop the case."

"Drop the case, indeed!" exclaimed Felix, evidently glad of an opportunity to vent the ill-humor which had been growing within him. "I should expect just such ridiculous advice from a spiritless coward like you!"

"Take care, Felix!" exclaimed his brother, a flush rising hastily to his forehead. "You mistake my character altogether if you think I am cowardly enough to submit to your insulting language. These three years of absence have weaned me from the old-time slavish submission to your tyrannical temper. I am a man myself now. You can say no more than that, and we both alike await the test of experience to prove our worth and ability. I say, again, I do not like this case, though I have no doubt the right is on father's side. Why must we cajole, and wheedle, and bribe that old reprobate? I would just arrest him, and compel his testimony."

"I should like to see the power that could compel an unwilling witness at our courts to speak the testimony required when there is not another soul to corroborate or impeach his assertions," answered Felix, with a sneer. "And as regards your having grown to be a man, I should like to see it proved by something more satisfactory than your assertion,

You think our cause right, and you would give it up tamely. Very mature judgment, truly."

Maurice Middleton's cheeks grew hotter still.

"I would not take away their whole subsistence from a failing old man and a helpless young woman. I have manhood enough for that."

Felix turned upon him with a still fiercer glare.

"Ah! I fathom the cause of this chivalrous conduct. You have seen Octavia Wainwright. You have fallen in love with her. But I warn you——"

He paused, fairly choked by his indignation from further speech.

Maurice smiled disdainfully.

"Spare yourself uneasiness, royal Felix," said he. "I have neither seen Miss Wainwright, nor cherish any intention of seeking her out. But your jealousy confirms my previous suspicions. You care about the success of my father's claim most of all because it will give you a hold upon a lady who has rejected your proffered love."

It was evident this random arrow struck home. Felix's thin face turned to a sickly greenish pallor.

"By St. George! Maurice Middleton, you shall repent that speech!" cried he, hoarsely.

Maurice laughed softly.

"Come, come, you are always quarreling," interposed their father, anxiously. "Do be quiet a little while, I beg of you. Maurice, I wish you would see after that draft."

"Yes, sir, I'll take myself out of the way with the utmost alacrity. Adieu, Don Felix."

The light, mocking echoes of his laugh lingered a moment after the door closed behind him.

Felix ground down a malediction.

"Father," said he, "I always disliked that boy. He has none of our blood in him."

"I know it," was the deprecating reply. "Aside from

“BUT, MISS WAINWRIGHT, AM I TO GO OR STAY?”—(P. 53.)



looks, one would know that you and he had different mothers. But he is my son, and your half-brother, and in his own line we must give him credit for smartness and ability. He has earned his full share of the family income, though he keeps his absurd, quixotie notions, in spite of my lectures. But now let us talk of business. So you have seen old Mathew Merle yourself."

Felix knit his forehead again.

"Yes, I have seen him. A wily old Fox, that's what he is; and you must set a watch upon him, or he will slip away without having given the testimony we need. I wish he could be trapped somehow into making his statements before a witness. That would be better than to have him on the stand."

"How can that be? I don't understand."

"Why, in that case we have just the testimony we desire, and no more."

"Do you think there is anything he could say to damage us?" asked the elder Mr. Middleton, with a startled look.

"I don't care to give expression to all my thoughts," was the rather ambiguous answer of Mr. Felix.

His father stood twirling nervously at the seal on his watch-chain, now and then lifting his eyes, and glancing uneasily at the moody face before him.

"I can't see a possibility of harm in his power, except from withholding the testimony," ventured he.

"I wish I couldn't," returned Felix. "However, the thing is to put it out of the man's power to do harm. I think you agree with me that the affair must go on at any cost."

"Certainly, certainly," replied the senior, with decided emphasis.

"Yes," repeated Felix, clenching the hands thrust under the skirts of his coat, and setting his teeth till they left

their imprint in the bloodless lip. "It shall go on; no obstacle shall hinder now."

"I wish I knew what danger you have discovered, Felix?"

"It is only a suspicion as yet, and, oddly enough, Octavia Wainwright was the first to suggest it to me. That girl has been to see old Merle. There was never another such a woman as she. Judge of my surprise when she said, gravely, this very evening, in talking over the case with her father—I took care to be near enough to hear every word—said she, 'I am not afraid of what the Middletons can do, father. This witness of theirs will ruin their case for them. He tried to cheat me also, but I read plainly he held another game in reserve. If they are keen and sagacious they will never bring him to the witness stand.' This was what she said, in that grave, sedate way of hers."

"I do not see yet," said Mr. Middleton, bewilderedly.

"Nor should I, if I had not watched her movements. What a queen she would make, with her brilliant genius, her subtle penetration, and indomitable energy!" he added, in an eager voice. "When she has married me, and the two causes are united, like the rival roses, I will defy all the other claims which may arise."

"Why don't you marry her, then, as soon as possible?"

Mr. Felix bit his lip again.

"Octavia Wainwright is not a common woman, sir. She will not be won in the tame every-day style. I make my moves cautiously, and only after due reflection. The next time I lay my suit before her, she will answer less haughtily at least."

"The *next* time!" repeated his father. "So Maurice was right—she has refused you *once*!"

A sullen, angry red swept into the face of Felix.

"I trust, sir, what I say to you confidentially is not to be repeated to that boy."

“Of course not. You are both ready enough to quarrel, without my help. But, Felix, I am anxious to know what danger can threaten our case?”

His son bent from his tall height, and whispered a single sentence.

But a cannon at his ear could not have shocked him more. Mr. John Middleton staggered back, turned deadly pale, and grasping at a chair to support himself, faltered:

“No, no, Felix! That is impossible!”

“I tell you, sir, it is coming to light, sure as fate, unless we stop it. It was a miserable mistake getting this Mathew Merle over here. He must not give in his evidence himself.”

“No, he must not. But how can it be helped?”

“Leave it to me, sir. Octavia Wainwright was right when she said, ‘The Middletons will take care of Mathew Merle.’”

Father and son grasped hands, looking into each other's faces with fiercely burning eyes. Look and gesture meant more than any speech of the tongue. And then they parted.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MUTILATED BIBLE.

The Sea Foam had gained the channel, and the white cliffs of the English shore were dwindling and dwindling into mere specks. The sails filled out stiffly, and laying over a little on one side, the gallant vessel plowed through the white-crested waves as though impelled by a living force within itself.

The mate walked the deck, casting a satisfied glance now and then up at the sails, and looking back toward the shore

with a seaman's appreciation of the stiff breeze which was hurrying them away from it. The sailors were exchanging smiling glances, or light jests, in good humor with all the world, because "this is a spanking breeze, now I tell you, Jack." "And don't she walk like a beauty? I tell you, my hearty, this is the prettiest craft you ever set foot on, whether you know it or not."

The captain of the *Sea Foam*, however, though he was seaman enough to appreciate a good sailer and a favorable wind, had the gravest face on board. He walked backward and forward along the after-deck, with his hands behind him, his eyes downcast, not speaking except when he had given the necessary orders for the management of the ship, and then in a voice so lacking its accustomed heartiness, that his officers were quite puzzled, and the old hands among the crew opened their eyes, wondering whatever it could be that had come over the "smartest, jolliest cap'n that ever a poor tar sailed under."

The truth was, Captain Lo knew that the time was swiftly approaching when he must face his passenger, and the paroxysm, whether of anger, terror, or distress, which would naturally result from his discovery of his extraordinary situation.

The lad had been lying all this time in a profound sleep. He had roused him twice to give a cup of coffee, hoping it would dispel the lethargy; but though it had been taken eagerly, the eyes scarcely opened, and the head had dropped again heavily. The last time, however, that Captain Lo had looked at him, he saw plainly that the power of the narcotic was passing away, and consciousness returning. He was very positive that his next visit would find his passenger awake and in his right mind.

It was the dread of this meeting and the leaden weight of his conscience which destroyed the usual light-hearted

good nature of the skipper of the *Sea Foam*. And yet, for all the dread, a subtle fascination drew him down into the cabin. And presently, after a careful glance which took in the distant shore, the set of the sails and the forward track, he turned toward the companion-way, and went down into the cabin.

His passenger's state-room was open, and Captain Lo was thus made aware that the lad had risen from the berth, and he was not in the least surprised to find the slight figure standing in the middle of the little state-room.

A pair of large, wistful, melancholy brown eyes, darkened a little by that expression of startled perplexity, were fixed inquiringly upon his.

Captain Lo wished the stanch, solid plank under his feet would give way and let him down out of sight, even though it plunged him into the chilling depths beneath.

He coughed rather nervously, and stammered:

"You are better. I am glad to see that you have recovered consciousness."

"Are you the master here? I judge I am on board some vessel. Will you tell me what one, and where bound?"

"It is the *Sea Foam*, bound to the East Indies, and I am Captain Lo Leyard."

"To the East Indies? Then it will be easy for me to reach Calcutta. I was born in Calcutta."

Captain Lo swallowed down the lump in his throat, which was near choking him.

"Indeed. So I may judge this is not your first voyage. Pray sit down. You are weak, and you must be half famished. I will order the steward to bring you the broth I ordered to be in readiness for your waking."

"How long have I slept, and who brought me here?" asked the boy, dropping listlessly into the seat toward which Captain Lo motioned him.

His calmness delighted the latter.

“Thank Heaven I am to be spared a flurry of alarm and distress,” thought he. “After all, my passenger is not so unwilling.”

And he answered, with more animation:

“It is a very strange affair, my boy. If you can explain it all to me, my curiosity will be very much relieved. A stranger, muffled up in a cloak, with a long, heavy beard and mustache, came and engaged passage, and said you would be brought on board when we reached the mouth of the river. Sure enough, just as the tug-boat left us, and we were ready to stand out to the channel, a boat came alongside, in all the mist and dark, and you were handed up to me, seeming to be in a profound sleep. I brought you down to the cabin, and when I returned on deck the boat had gone. Two trunks were put on board for you. Am I to understand that you are ignorant of this, or repugnant to the voyage?”

“I don’t know whether I am glad or sorry,” answered the lad, slowly resting his head against the cabin wall, and half closing his eyes. “But I am certainly at a loss to know what it means. I remember rather indistinctly, but the last impression I have is of being in the chamber of a lodging-house in London, drinking a cup of coffee the landlady brought to me.”

“It was drugged. You have evidently been under the effects of a powerful narcotic,” observed the captain, indignation in his voice and look.

“I suppose so, that I might be brought to your ship. But it is very strange,” returned he, passing his hand across his forehead.

“I would not puzzle over it now. You say you don’t know whether to be glad or sorry. I advise you to decide to be glad, to try to make the best of the circumstances, and be as happy as possible under them. I assure you I will do my best to make you comfortable.”

The large, brown eyes were lifted again. Captain Lo found it hard to sit composed under their scrutiny, and it was like a knife-stab when the tremulous voice said, trustfully:

"Thank you, sir; I am sure you will. Your face tells me I may find a friend in you."

And then the eyes fell again, the head drooped to the supporting hand, and Captain Lo's passenger fell into a deep reverie.

"You shall have the broth now, and some toast and a cup of coffee, and after it you will feel like another person."

"Not coffee," said the boy, hastily, putting on a look of disgust.

"Well, tea, then. But you must really take some nourishment."

And Captain Lo bustled out to the galley to attend to the matter himself, instead of trusting either steward or cook, trying to soften the sting of his accusing conscience by these little attentions.

As soon as he was gone, the boy put his hand into his pocket and drew forth the letter he had found there, with a purse containing a generous sum of gold, when he first awoke to a realization of his situation.

The handwriting was bold and firm. The letter bore no date, had no signature, but contained these lines:

"You avow yourself well-nigh driven to despair by the misery and cruelty of the circumstances which surround you. I heard you, only a few days ago, cry out in very agony of passionate grief: 'Oh, if I could fly anywhere, change lives and destinies with any one, only to escape the recognition of my persecutors, my jailers, my despotic masters.'

"Such passionate demands are almost always answered, and the realization for you comes promptly.

"Behold! When you will read this you will find yourself in changed circumstances, bound by none of the fetters you detest, freed from

the evils which threatened. Make your own circumstances now; choose your path freely. Your disappearance from London will be a mystery which even Mathew Merle's craft cannot fathom. If you choose, your past and your identity can be wiped out so completely, those enemies cannot track you out; for though it will be obviously necessary for you to avoid England and shun India, the world is wide, and holds many pleasant scenes and happy lands. This is written by one upon whose face you have never looked, whose identity you will never know, who is not so much of a hypocrite as to pretend to be doing this out of friendship to you, but to foil the wicked plans of Mathew Merle."

"Another mystery," sighed the youth. "Another of the inexplicable tangles that coil around me. Another current bearing me on, a powerless agent drifting whither its impetus bears me."

The graceful head dropped again to the clasping hands, and the eyes were full of melancholy.

It was raised again presently, a hopeful gleam brightening over the face.

"Well, I must accept the situation. That much is positive. And why not, as the good captain suggests, be happy over it? The unknown writer is right; it is possible for me to make my own future now. If I have escaped from my guardian's knowledge, when this voyage is ended, and I stray into some pleasant home, why may I not find independence and happiness both? Just now I seem hardly to have energy and spirit to face anything. But it will be different in a little time. And it might be happiness to have escaped from them. I remember well how I broke forth that evening in my great distress after my guardian's visit. How I wished myself anywhere—in a lonely desert, on a trackless ocean. This is far better. If I can read a face correctly, this Captain Leyard is a kind and gentlemanly man. He can help me. He will be kind to me. Indeed—indeed, I will seek to be happy!"

These reflections were interrupted by the entrance of the

captain, followed by the steward, with a great tray in his arms.

The youthful passenger could not but smile to see the array of delicacies brought out from the lockers.

Captain Lo himself arranged the table, and sat down opposite, watching with delight the zest with which his guest approached them.

"Well," said he, smilingly, "you are not so very unhappy?"

"No, sir. I have resigned myself to the situation, and mean to make the best of what, after all, is not so very bad. I am fond of the sea."

"You must come on deck. We have a spanking breeze, and are slipping along at a famous rate," returned the captain, growing more and more relieved.

"I will come presently. I should like to look at my trunk. You said one was brought with me, and this key in my pocket, I presume, unlocks it."

"Yes, to be sure. It was stowed in that locker there under your berth. Well, come to the deck when you are ready. It will bring more color to your cheek, this cool breeze. You are awfully pale, but, then, it is that accursed narcotic. In another day you will be all right. But, by the way, you haven't told me your name."

The face was not pale. At the moment the lad answered, a scarlet flush went over it, even to the temples, though it faded a moment after.

"The unknown visitor who paid my passage should have provided me with a name also," answered he, with a touch of bitterness in the tone. "He seems to have decided so much, he might as well have finished it all. Possibly he could have found a more lucky one than mine has been, but it is at your service. Will Yarrel, sir."

"Well, Master Will, I shall be happy to see you on deck presently. Now I will leave you to examine your trunk.

I trust you will find in it everything you desire; if not, my store is at your service."

As he spoke, the captain left the inner cabin, and went out through the other one, in which was the table for the under officers, and their berths.

Will Yarrel took the key from his pocket and went into the state-room. He pulled out the trunk, unlocked it hastily, and opened the lid.

A suit of boy's clothing met his eye at its first glance. It was entirely new. A bitter smile curled the lad's lip as he flung it out upon the floor, and searched deeper, examining every article with close scrutiny.

There was everything needed for the toilet of a genteel young gentleman—abundance of clothing, a dressing-case, writing-desk, a table, book-rack filled with books, even a pair of worked slippers.

Everything was new, unsoiled, fresh from the dealer's shop.

Will Yarrel removed every article from the trunk, littering the floor around him. When he came to a common, rather clumsy, and well-worn Bible, he uttered an exclamation of joy, and took it fondly in his hands. But his eye flashed indignantly as he opened the leather cover. The blank leaves had been ruthlessly torn away.

"My father's handwriting—all that I possessed as a memento of my mother's married life—taken away from me! Shameful! cruel! wicked!" ejaculated he.

And then the hand dropped listlessly over the Bible, and the great, mournful eyes deepened to the blackness of mingled terror and melancholy.

"What is this mystery that has followed me ever since I have been able to notice and realize?" murmured he. "Why can I not pierce it, seize upon its meaning? How fondly I have dreamed over it! have fancied that my locket

would some time discover it to me! And yet I am continually baffled.

He stopped abruptly, and put his hand under the collar around his neck.

An exclamation of dismay and grief announced the discovery of some great loss.

"They have taken off the chain! They have stolen my chain and locket! Oh, I have lost the only clew to my true name and parentage!" he cried, and then fell to examining anew, shaking every article, exploring the pockets, turning out the contents of every box.

In vain! The mutilated Bible was the only link left him to prove anything concerning his past life.

He thrust back the contents of the trunk, closed the lid hastily, and pushed it back into the locker.

Then he went out into the cabin, and sitting down by the table, he laid his head down upon his extended arms. His cheek was very pale, his eyes troubled, and his voice trembled as he murmured:

"I am indeed a lonely, helpless waif, drifting out upon an unknown ocean, without chart or compass of my own."

Poor Will Yarrel! And he did not guess the solution which weighed so heavily on Captain Lo's mind. He had not the faintest presentiment of the lonely, deserted ocean isle.

CHAPTER V.

"DEATH EVERYWHERE!"

"Letters, Felix? Anything from Screw & Scattergood's office? My father was just asking. Bring them here, if you please. I will look at them before I go."

Miss Wainwright stood at the drawing-room door, a

vision dazzling and beautiful, beyond comparison to the eyes which looked upon her.

She was going out to a dinner party, and the carriage was already waiting at the door. She wore a pearl-colored satin, whose lustrous shimmer was broken here by undulating lines of foamy lace, and there by little knots of fluttering ribbon, with a sparkling fringe of crystal pendants. That wonderful hair of hers shone and rippled under a pearl fillet. A pendant pearl hung by a delicate gold chain from the finely shaped ear, and a chain of strung pearls was flung carelessly around the ivory fair throat.

Felix had never more fully realized her queenly loveliness of person, nor that exquisite grace of manner which, after all, is the birthright of nature, and not the acquisition of culture.

With the bundle of letters clasped nervously in his fingers, he stood staring upon her, all the wild devotion of his fierce nature flaming up into his eyes.

She was so royally beautiful, this Octavia Wainwright, and the keen, sagacious, subtle mind kept such worthy company with the loveliness of person, Felix Thorne said there was no one like her in all the wide world. He could have knelt, like a devotee, and kissed the ground where she trod. If he had dared, he would have seized that very moment to have flung himself at her feet and demanded to be set any herculean task, the performance of which would be rewarded by her favor. He knew, he felt it; not with the shuddering terror such consciousness should have brought, but with a sort of evil pride and triumph that he would be willing to undergo any sort of torture or penance—would risk his very soul—but to see those red lips smile tenderly, the bright, steady eyes droop coyly with a girl's bashful love, before his ardent gaze.

Instead she stood before him serenely calm, fixing her glance gravely upon him, until that passionate glow flamed

into his face, when she shut her red lips together with her father's sternness, and a frown wrinkled her fair, smooth forehead. It was singular how, without a word, scarcely a look or gesture, she managed to freeze him with the consciousness of her icy displeasure. Octavia Wainwright was no coquette.

Felix Thorne—as Miss Wainwright only knew him—gathered together his dissolving wits, braced himself with a desperate effort, and in a moment had resumed his ordinary free and easy but decorously respectful manner.

“I think there is a communication from General Wainwright's solicitors. It bears their seal, at least,” he said, quietly.

She stretched out her white, somewhat large but symmetrical hand, retreating into the drawing-room as she did so.

Felix followed, with the look of one accustomed to share her perplexities, if he might not venture to seek her love.

Miss Wainwright went up to the marble chimney-piece, and leaning against it for support, broke open the letter with an impatient hand.

Her eye ran over the closely written lines with swift, flaming glances, and when she had finished, she folded it carefully and restored it to its envelope.

Felix had watched her face closely, passionate love and fierce anger flaming up in his heart.

“Well,” said she, slowly taking up a mantle which was thrown carelessly over a chair near her, “suspense, at least, will be spared us. The case is coming on in three days.”

“So soon?” said Felix, dropping his eyes to the floor; “and are they prepared?”

“As well as they ever will be,” answered Miss Wainwright, a slow smile playing over her face.

He looked up now.

“And you are not disturbed, Miss Wainwright?”

"No, not particularly. Do you imagine these nameless adventurers can so easily oust us from the home of our ancestors?"

"But they declare they have a better claim both to the name and the home," said he, a flush stealing into his sallow cheek.

A glance of cold contempt fell upon him.

"Are you espousing their cause? Let them prove the marriage of Gustavus Wainwright. That is the chief point we dispute."

"But I understand there was a witness."

She took up the fan hanging by a slender silver chain from her filigree bracelet, and waved it carelessly to and fro before she answered:

"I am not disturbed concerning that witness. Those Middletons are too wary to bring him forward."

"I have heard you say as much before. But the mere statement is ambiguous. I do not understand——"

"But I do," she interrupted, hastily; "and you will not be required to wait long to see that I am right. This vexatious matter will soon be ended."

"You are so confident?" said he, and there was a little startled apprehension in his voice.

She vailed beneath the white eyelids drooping to her cheek a smile of exultant triumph, and answered, coldly:

"You are in a singular mood, Felix. Why should I not be confident? Do you question the right of my father to Wainwright Slope?"

"Many just causes are lost in a suit at law," returned he, gravely; "and I confess, as far as my judgment goes, the case looks formidable. I had the impression that General Wainwright was also anxious, and you yourself startled and alarmed. There may be new developments, however."

"Nothing new to me," she answered.

Something in her tone made him start and look up has-

tily into her face. He bit his lip angrily, and there was a hint of his resentment in his voice."

"Thank you. I perceive your meaning. While I believed that I was sharing your fullest confidence, you have chosen to keep your secrets from me. I have not really known all that was getting ready for the case."

"Have you any just cause for complaint, if it were so, though I do not admit that it is?" demanded Octavia Wainwright, imperiously. "You are my father's secretary, and have certainly received every mark of favor from him. He has been generous in his confidence, and allowed you intimate acquaintance with all his affairs. But were you ever chosen as his daughter's confessor or counselor?"

Felix Thorne's sallow cheek grew deadly pale; he clenched his fingers till the nails cut into the palm of the closed hand hanging by his side; a spark of fierce anger, and yet passionate love, leaped into his gray eyes.

"No," said he, bitterly, "never! General Wainwright's daughter treats me as if I were a brute—a dumb creature, without heart or soul."

"I have never refused due respect to your ability, your mental superiority over the majority of your class," answered Miss Wainwright, slowly and steadily. "When you have kept in your rightful position, I have been both confidential and friendly. You know very well what absurd behavior it is that excites my anger?"

"Yes, I know. You think the humble, obscure secretary must needs be a stone or a stock; must have no eye for your transcendent grace and beauty; must be blind, and deaf, and dumb. You resent it as an insult if his heart kindles a fierce glow of passionate love for one who is the perfection of all womanly grace in his eyes. You show it to me often enough, and in your wordless way, which stabs more deeply than the most scornful or angry tirade. But

am I not a man, Miss Wainwright, with a man's capabilities, and rights, and deservings?"

She was wrapping the scarf around her, and made no answer.

"Yes," continued he, his eyes gleaming, and the color coming back to his face. "Now that the seal is broken from my lips, for this once you shall hear what I wish to say. I love you! I shall always love you! Until my heart ceases to beat it will throb beneath its unalterable devotion to you. Be you ever so cold and haughty, I shall hope still sometime to win your favor. I shall never cease working to bring about the realization of the one desire of my life—never!—unless the sod covered you, and then I should die and follow you!"

The words came with fierce impetuosity. His breast was heaving beneath his emotion.

Miss Wainwright could not be insensible to the fervor of this man's devotion. She knew that it was genuine, without any affectation; but somehow it did not flatter her as such idolatrous love would have pleased the vanity of other women.

She turned upon him coldly, with scarcely repressed anger:

"This rhapsody had better have remained unspoken, Mr. Thorne. It will prevent any further intimacy between us, and, when my father recovers, it will oblige him to find a new secretary."

"Cruel! hard! pitiless!" ejaculated Felix, with lips which quivered pitifully. "Oh, why can I not despise and detest you as I ought? But I cannot. I can no more resist this mad, overwhelming love than I can prevent my heart from beating."

His voice was a wailing cry as he concluded.

For the first time, she seemed to feel an impulse of com-

passion. The chilling anger faded out of her eyes, and she said, in a gentler tone:

"You must go away, Felix; for your own sake, you must go away. You must leave us the moment my father recovers."

He sighed softly.

"Oh, Miss Wainwright, I could not forget you if I were buried alive in the great Sahara, or drifting endlessly upon the Polar Sea. And you will need me if your father should *not* recover."

All the coldness and passiveness faded now, and a tremor of agitation convulsed her face.

"*Not* recover! Felix Thorne, how dare you insinuate such a thing? My father not recover! He comes of a long-lived family, and he is only fifty-eight. It is cruel in you to suggest such a doubt."

There were tears in her eyes, and the bright drops hung trembling on the long lashes.

"How she loves that haughty, selfish old man! She has given so much of her heart to him, there is no room left for others," thought Felix, drearily; and then he answered, gravely:

"Indeed, Miss Wainwright, I did not intend to grieve you. I supposed the physician had told you what he spoke to me so plainly."

Her face grew pale, she caught her breath nervously, and clasping her hand across her heart, spoke imperiously, in a low, concentrated tone of deep anxiety:

"Tell me every word he said to you. He never hinted to me that there was any question about his recovery."

"I am very sorry I spoke," stammered Felix. "Perhaps, after all, I mistook——"

"Tell me just what he said to you!" stamping her foot impatiently, the hands still pressed close and hard against her heart.

"He told me he had little doubt the disease would terminate General Wainwright's life."

The hands were withdrawn and laid hastily upon her forehead.

"No, no; it cannot be! Oh, no; it cannot be! It must not, it shall not be! My dear father! he is all I have! I shall die if I lose him!" she murmured, despairingly.

Felix was deeply touched by her grief.

"It is but the opinion of one man," said he, soothingly. She started forward eagerly.

"You are right. How can I have been so thoughtless? He shall have down the ablest of the London physicians. We will save him yet. Oh, thank you, Felix, for telling me before it is too late!"

She had forgotten her late coldness and anger. He saw that she scarcely remembered anything of his fiery speech. Her anxiety for her father swallowed up all other emotion.

"Ah," said he, smiling drearily; "so you are willing to thank me, Miss Wainwright, for this!"

She scarcely heard him, but began hurriedly folding up the mantle, and then unclasped the pearl necklace.

"Will you tell Robert to bring up the carriage and fresh horses for a long ride. I am going to London."

"The carriage is waiting to take you to the dinner party. You can send by a dozen methods to a London physician. You are all ready for the dinner party, Miss Wainwright."

"Do you think I will go *now*? No; I am going to London at once. I will trust no messenger. I wish to make sure for myself which is the ablest of them all, and that one must come down to my father. Let Robert change the horses, if those are unequal to the London journey."

She swept past him as she spoke.

He caught at the glistening folds of her dress.

"But, Miss Wainwright, am I to go or stay?"

"Go? Go where?" asked she, impatiently.

He hung his head in sorrow and humility. How utterly his affairs had vanished from her mind!

"It is of no consequence," he answered, in a stifled voice.

And Octavia Wainwright swept through into the hall, and the great door closed after her.

Felix Thorne Middleton stood looking at the blank space with dreary eyes.

"What a bitter farce this life of ours can be!" muttered he. "Here I am ready to peril my life, my honor, my very soul's salvation, to win that woman's toleration, and she has no more thought for my agony and despair than for the existence of a fly upon the ceiling there."

Presently the old sardonic smile broke over his face.

"But my time will come. The strange girl loves the old place as much as she loves her father. She will consent to be my wife rather than be thrust out from it. Humiliating as it is to confess it, I shall be thankful to obtain even such a beggar's portion; for I cannot, though I were to tear out my heart from my breast, I cannot put away this wild love which is consuming me!"

He stood there bolt upright, until he heard a light step crossing the corridor above; then, remembering the charge he had received, he went out and gave the order about the horses.

Scarcely an hour afterward, Miss Wainwright, dressed in a gray traveling suit, came swiftly down the stairs. Felix was ready to hand her into the carriage, hoping to be repaid by a single glance, but a thick veil concealed her face. She paused, however, just as she was seating herself, and leaning out, said:

"You must go and talk with papa, Felix, while I am gone, and keep upon cheerful topics, and leave business affairs alone. Good-day."

Did she know the cordial tone of that good-day would keep him earnest and submissive to her bidding?

The Wainwright carriage drove into London just before sunset, and in taking the shortest route for their destination, it passed by a police station, around which a crowd had gathered, and for a moment blocked the way.

The stopping of the carriage roused Miss Wainwright from her abstraction, and she leaned out, but drew back instantly, shuddering at the sight presented by a hideous, ghastly burden, borne upon a plank between two men—a drowned woman, the face so decomposed by long soaking in the water, as to make it seem impossible it had ever been a human countenance.

Recognition of the features was, of course, impossible, but the clothing was little injured. A tall, vixenish looking woman, in a black cape and hood, stood by the litter, and lifted the dripping tresses of brown hair.

Her voice reached the carriage as she spoke, in answer to some interrogation of the station officer.

“Yes, sir, there’s no doubt about it—they are her clothes, and she had such hair. It’s the poor little girl as has been missing from my house these two weeks. Her uncle has been searching everywhere. We thought as how somebody had run away with her. He’s gone now looking for her. Poor thing! I’m just mistrusting she had some trouble, and took this way to get out of it.”

“You are positive about the identity?” asked the officer.

“I am positive about them clothes. I can’t tell anything by such a face as that. You’d best save the clothes for him to see when he comes.”

The litter was still resting on the pavement before the station door.

Octavia Wainwright bent out again, gave one swift glance, and then pulled the strap vigorously.

“Drive on, Robert, or return to the other street. Do not keep me here.”

The carriage whirled around, but not before she heard the officer say:

“I will preserve the clothing, and this locket hung around the neck, and I shall put down the name of the suicide as you have told me—‘Mina, niece of one Mathew Merle, of Calcutta.’”

General Wainwright's daughter put her hands to her ears, and looked around her with wild and frightened eyes.

She was white and cold as a statue of snow when Robert helped her out under the gas-lighted entrance of the town residence; but she walked steadily and firmly up the steps.

“Death everywhere!” murmured she. “How little, after all, this world is worth!”

CHAPTER VI.

THE RECIPE.

There is a low, rambling building, with a grave, rather forbidding-looking front, on a street below the great stone convict hospital of Sydney. The street facing is somber and chilling, with its dark stones discolored by age; its scarcely less grim windows, narrow, and hung with formal, sad-colored drapery; its entire absence of brightness, whether of blossoming plants, or gay ribbons, or blooming faces of pretty women and merry children. People who lived in the vicinity, or those who were in the habit of passing frequently, cast glances toward the place of mingled awe and interest. Almost every one knew that it was the house of Doctor Morley; and no one certainly who had any call at the hospital, or the government offices, but recognized the small, spare figure and erect head, with its closely-cropped gray hair, its small, piercing black eyes, and reticent lips, whenever they met Doctor Morley, the head physician of the

hospital. He was not a man to be regarded lightly, although among the very best of his friends none could boast of any close intimacy. He had a way with him of putting at a distance any careless or trivial conversation, any attempt, however friendly, of passing the barrier set up between physician and patient, business relations, or scientific devotees. If ever a man lived for and gave himself up to his profession, it was Doctor Morley. The wide world seemed to him but a field affording simply opportunities for scientific investigation into the healing art. He was stern and hard to fanaticism against quackery; he had no patience with drivellers, little mercy for weakness. But, perhaps, the most significant thing which could be said of him was, that many a poor, battered, broken-down wretch in the convict hospital yonder breathed the only prayer of blessing his blue lips knew, when Doctor Morley came and went. That many a hard, bitter face, sin-marked and sad, brightened into its most Christian expression at sight of the small, spare figure, in its rusty service-coat; that there were not a dozen, or a score, but a hundred stalwart fellows, in and around Sydney, who, having at one time or another gone into the hospital, had passed out so won to this man, that, had any danger menaced him, they would have sprung forward to his aid, counting the risk of their lives of little consequence, if given to his service.

The government officers, from highest to lowest, held Doctor Morley in the highest estimation, sought his advice in many other matters than pertained to his profession, and had profound respect for his worth and knowledge. Nevertheless, there was a little irritation and awe in the minds of some of the higher officials.

Doctor Morley was of no account at the grand dinners given at the government house. Why would not the man unbend from that chilling reserve of his? What need of forever carrying the stern duties of his life, never dropping

them, not even for an hour of conviviality? Had the man actually no tenderness or cheeriness in his nature? Were his nerves steel-strung, as well as those wiry sinews of the muscular arm, which never quivered or faltered in the most harrowing cases which came under his surgical skill? Did he never need recreation or relaxation?

This was a question often asked by the jovial, pleasure-loving dignitaries, who would fain have lured Doctor Morley's keen mind to have contributed its brilliant repartee and jest over their festive boards. But Doctor Morley was proof against their enticements. When his hours of work were over, he went to his dark, chilling house, walked gravely and soberly up the dingy steps, and vanished from the view of outsiders.

It is pleasant to know there was really a cheery home side to the experience of this man, who was truly a philanthropist in the most unselfish sense of the word. Scarcely ever had his key clicked in the lock, and the door unclosed, than a step firm and steady, but light, advanced from the corridor above, and a moment after a young woman, in the very plainest of attire, with a clear, steady, hazel eye, and a fresh, healthy complexion, came quietly to his side.

"The coffee is ready, sir, and the papers are in from the mail," she would say, her face all aglow with some inward gladness.

And Doctor Morley would nod back, and a sympathetic smile brighten over the grave, sallow face.

"Then I will go out into the garden at once, Jenny Wren, and do you come out with your knitting, for I have something to tell you about poor Bob Jardeneer."

And the doctor walked through the house into the garden in the rear, a cozy retreat cut off from the observation of the street, or no one there would have pronounced Doctor Morley's house cheerless and dreary; for all the gloom and grimness at the front of the mansion was atoned for here.

The high wall was flanked by rows of alternating English oaks and Cape pines on either side. The rear of the little square was formed by the house walls, on which ivy and training vines festooned a graceful curtain, and in front opened a fair prospect of dimpling water, with glimpses of sail and steamer flitting across the cove toward the great wharf on the other side. In the garden, commanding the best view of the cove, was an arbor, in which was set a tiny table and a single chair. Here Doctor Morley always found, on his return from the hospital rounds, a tray, with a steaming cup of fragrant coffee, and a plate of some little delicacy, now of one sort and again of another, according as his housekeeper had opportunity to prepare, and always on the table was a little wicker-basket containing the day's mail.

The housekeeper was this same quiet-eyed, healthful-faced young woman, Jane West by name—Jenny Wren, as the doctor called her—the nearest approach to a jest that he was guilty of.

Doctor Morley had neither wife nor daughter, mother nor sister. Jane West was his only female friend, for she was a friend, although she filled also a servant's place. No other being in the wide world knew so much of Doctor Morley's inner life, his true nature. With the subtle keenness of deep affection, Jane West could tell his moods by a single glance at his face. To say that she loved her master, would but inadequately express the passionate devotion and reverence with which she looked upon him. The very ground he trod, the merest trifle his hand touched, became hallowed in her eyes: and to insinuate that any other being in the wide world approached him in wisdom, professional attainment, or heroic self-abnegation, would have been sacrilege to the young woman's creed. And yet Jenny Wren did not gain her name from any likeness to the thoughtless sportive-ness of the songster. If ever there was a sensible, matter-

of-fact, steady young woman, that woman was Jane West. She wasted no time in ideal visions, but put her hands energetically to every practical work found before them. And it was her peculiar elasticity of disposition, her ability to fling off fretting, and make the most of what light and joy could be hunted out, that caused Doctor Morley to name her for the busy, restless little Wren.

This young woman's history was somewhat peculiar. One day Doctor Morley, in going among the new patients, found a black-browed fellow lying on the hospital-bed groaning in agony, but refusing to receive any attentions of the nurse or doctor. The man seemed not only half-crazed with pain, but overwhelmed by some great mental trouble. He was a convict, a mason, and the wall of the building on which he had been at work had caved in and carried him with it. Frightfully crushed and maimed, his recovery seemed the meekest shadow of a chance, and the other doctors were discussing whether it was of any use to attempt amputation, when Doctor Morley appeared upon the scene.

Without a single word of questioning, the doctor, in that cool, magnetic way of his, stepped up to the bed and examined the case thoroughly. The bright, dilated eye of the patient watched him narrowly, and the fierce imprecations were silenced.

"Sir," said the latter, tremulously, "what is the word?"

"A pretty hard one, my poor fellow," answered the doctor, in a sorrowful voice. "You must suffer terribly at all events."

"Never mind the pain. But can I hope to get over it? Oh, sir! if you would say that I might."

"But very few things are impossible, my man. In this I should say there are ten chances against you for one in your favor."

"And there is *one* then! Oh, sir, Heaven bless you!"

“It is a pitiful chance—don’t build upon it. Ten against one. Are you willing to risk it?”

“Anything! anything! It will be bad enough at best, but I can do something with my hands, and poor little Jenny won’t mind a crippled daddy if she has his love. Oh, my little Jenny! there will be nobody to love her if I die. Her mother went this very year.”

The cold drops stood on his forehead—agony of mind beyond torture of body.

“My poor fellow, tell me your story now, before we begin with you; just words enough for me to understand how I may help your child, if the need comes.”

And then Doctor Morley listened to a pitiful story, common enough, too, alas! in the colony, of how the man had been lured into wrong by the indulgence of strong drink—how when maddened by its poison, and when under the pernicious influence of his evil passions he had transgressed the laws, been discovered, tried, and sentenced to transportation. And his faithful wife had followed, and kept as near as possible to him, and her love and the glimpses caught of his babe had been his sole joy and comfort.

And now the devoted wife was dead, and the child was left to his sole care. She was there now in the care of the matron of the convict boarding-house, a little girl of ten. What would become of her if anything should take him away? And again he groaned in agony.

Doctor Morley took the trembling hand in his.

“My poor fellow, rest easy, your child shall not suffer, nor want a good home, if she is unfortunate enough to lose her father too. Keep up as brave a heart as possible, in order to help you through, and believe me that you shall have careful treatment. The rest is in Heaven’s hands.”

The poor, suffering creature clung to the cool, strong fingers.

“Doctor, doctor! you’re a man to be trusted. You’ve

taken the worst off my mind. Little Jenny will be cared for. Now I am ready for anything. Do what you're a mind to, doctor."

"You understand the risk—that it is ten against one. You wish the amputation to be tried?"

"Indeed, sir, I do, and I trust it all to you. It will be right for Jenny either way."

And so it was. The man sank under the operation, and Jane West came to live in Doctor Morley's house. She had been there fifteen years now, and had grown up under his eyes into the same staid, discreet, but bright-looking young woman.

He had played with her at first, but in an awkward fashion, and he was thankful when her strengthening intellect allowed him to take her into his studies. It was her love for Doctor Morley which first induced her to enter the dry precincts of such researches as his, but presently she was fascinated and enthralled, and became an eager student for herself.

The doctor often secretly wondered at the aptitude and nerve she showed, never shrinking even from the first dissection he allowed her to witness. He took singular pleasure in assisting and directing her, playfully called her his young student—his embryo doctor.

Living in their isolated way, it was natural that she should share a great deal of his confidence—that he should in a measure forget her sex, and converse upon graver and weightier themes than women are accustomed to.

At first he had, in a blind sort of fashion, tried to cut down, and prune his thoughts and instructions into the lighter delicacy of diet supposed to be the only digestible one for women. But after he came home one day and found that she had extracted a tooth, in her intense sympathy for a suffering child, and performed the—for a woman—heroic operation successfully and skillfully, he grew

to think less about it, so that it was not long before he shared with her all his anxieties concerning his patients—allowed her to prepare his medicines, and deal out recipes even when he was absent. She held the patients who came to the house invariably, under whatever operation might be performed, and Doctor Morley, when he saw that however intense her womanly sympathy, her nerves never played her false, went so far as to carefully teach her how to set an arm, or to tie up an artery, in his own skillful fashion.

Jane West repaid all the kindness he had manifested after she grew to womanhood. When the old housekeeper died she glided quietly into the place, and her loving service and watchful care made his home a blessed retreat for him. The whole study of her life indeed had been to please and spare him—to soothe away the pangs of an inward wound which she knew, because she was so quick to read his thoughts, never ceased its smarting night or day.

And all this is a digression, a look backward, for on the morning that I bring the reader to look at Doctor Morley's house, its owner lies stiff and cold in the seldom used state parlor, and Jane West is sitting up in her chamber with her hands clasped tightly across her forehead, so numb and dazed by the sudden blow that she cannot shed a tear. The English colors on the hospital cupola and the great flag at the Governor's house are at half-mast. The guard that goes marching along the promenade under the Cape Pines have crape fluttering from their arms, and more than one soul in Sydney mourns sincerely for a good man gone.

He was found dead in his bed, a sweeter smile of restful peace on the cold lips than they had often known in life.

There is a brother of his who lives in Melbourne, but the two have had little in common. He has come now, and is in the room below with a lawyer. The distance, of course, precludes the possibility of summoning English relatives, and presently the gathering of friends assembled to pay the

last honors will bear him to his final rest in an Australian grave.

Jane West, from her window, sees the knots of people approaching, and presently the guard, with their crape-wreathed arms, stepping slow and solemn before the hearse.

She shudders, and drops her white face into her hands.

They will take him away—her best friend—almost her only friend—and no one has bidden her to sit among the mourners.

“What need?” she asks, and looks up pitifully at the sky. “He already knows that my whole life is darkened—clad in mourning.”

And so she sits there in her chamber, with bowed head and wide, tearless eyes, while the services proceed.

It is over at last, and the coffin is borne away. Still she sits there numb and tearless. The muffled notes of the cathedral bell, tolling for the approach of the funeral train, come dully to her ears. The volley, which gives notice that the sods are lying now upon that pulseless breast, makes her aware of what is passing there in the distant grave-yard. Yet the dull, apathetic look does not pass from her face; she only leans her head against the sill of the open window and looks down into the garden. Doctor Morley will never again enter the little arbor. There will be no more coffee for her to serve there. This beautiful life of hers has broken up sharply enough. She only wonders that the pain does not make itself more perceptible. She asks herself vaguely if she is not hard-hearted and unfeeling that she cannot shed a tear, and then drops her head again on the window-sill and pulls the curtains around her.

An hour or two pass. There are running carriages and steps passing into the house, and presently two gentlemen pass down out into the garden with cigars. The fine aroma rises up to her; but she does not stir, until a scrap of the

conversation comes up also. Then she lifts her head, and returning life flashes into it.

They are talking about Doctor Morley and herself. Cruel ! Satanic ! How dare they insult the pure honor of the dead man, if they have no chivalrous compassion for a defenseless woman ? She shudders as she hears the new heir's evil laugh and miserable jest. Is this a brother of Doctor Morley ? Can brethren indeed be so wildly dissimilar ? Jane West clenches her hands, and glares down upon him through the vailing curtains. She takes interest now to look at him. The face, with its cold eyes and greedy lips, and narrow forehead, bears its own condemnation. She turns her head again and listens.

"This girl, you say, knew all his secrets. She shall just hand over the recipe for that cordial. No doubt she has made way with it to suit her own ends. She is keen enough to see there is a fortune in it."

"There is no question about that. I've told the doctor, many a time, he could make himself rich on that cordial, if he would only ask his price for it. But you know he has given it away, far and wide, for just the cost of making."

"He was an obstinate fool !" ejaculated the heir, angrily. "He ought to have left a snug fortune, and there is only this estate, and a poor pittance at the bank. I say he was a fool."

How Jane West's hazel eyes glittered !

"But the cordial recipe will be a fortune. As I said before, I am willing to become equal partner in the business. And just now when he is dead the demand will be greater than ever. They are not to know but he had a great quantity on hand. But I have searched thoroughly without finding the recipe among his papers. The girl knows. It's good luck for me he went off sudden. I'll be bound he meant to make a will, and give her what there was. But

we must bring her to terms. There's ways enough, and I swear I sha'n't scruple about the means I employ."

They went on talking, but they had moved on farther, and Jane lost the rest. But she had heard enough. All apathy and numbness had vanished now. The blood went tingling and burning through every vein. Her cheeks were scarlet, her eyes were two blazing stars.

"Doctor Morley," murmured she, "now I can prove my gratitude to you. I remember so well what you said to me. Oh, I can hear your kind voice this very moment. 'Jenny Wren, I am going to teach you how to make this cordial. It is the result of years and years' close study, and, as you know, has proved to be the best thing yet offered, especially adapted to the ailments of this climate. I have kept the secret from all the rest, because I will not have it made a money-making concern. You know how I hate fortunes made from the needs or ailments of others. I did not work over this that it might be turned into pounds and shillings. I think it would haunt me in my grave if it were made up and hawked and sold like the quack nostrums. I can trust you, child. When I am gone you will make it, as I have done, for the poor and wretched.'"

"That was what you said, Doctor Morley. You *shall* rest peacefully. If they kill me, they shall not wring the recipe from me. And there is something else, the secret I could never fathom, your great sorrow. I remember what you said, as you laid your hand on the little sandal wood box in the secret drawer of the secretaire. You said, 'Jenny Wren, this box of mine must be sent to the address of the little package within it, when I am gone. Don't let the lawyers or executors touch it. I give it to your charge.' Oh, how could I have forgotten it! I must snatch it from their grasp somehow. This mission I must accomplish, and then I must fly from Australia. I know that man as well as if I had lived years in his presence. He will hunt me

down only for the sake of that recipe. And his vile slanders will poison my life. I will escape from him while yet I may."

She had scarcely composed herself, when a step approached her door, and a peremptory knock summoned her to open it.

The new owner was standing there, a thin veil of courtesy concealing his eagerness and indignation.

"I am sorry to disturb you, but we have been looking vainly for my brother's recipe for his famous cordial. There is a great demand for it just now, and it will be wise to keep up the supply. I presume you can tell us where to find it."

Jane West grew a little paler, but she looked him steadily in the eye.

"I am not aware that there has ever been such a recipe written down. I am quite sure that Doctor Morley took especial pains to keep it in his memory."

The heir glared at her savagely, though he still spoke smoothly.

"You know it, which is just as well. Please to write it down for me."

She stood grave and steady.

"I have nothing to write, sir. Doctor Morley was very careful to give every one to understand that there was to be no regular manufacture of the cordial after his death."

"Do you mean to say that you do not know how it was compounded. What were the ingredients?"

Jane was silent.

"Answer me," said he, fiercely. "Do you know how the cordial was made?"

Grave and steady still was Jane West's reply.

"I do know, but I shall never tell you. Doctor Morley charged me to see that it was never made for money, and I shall keep my word to him."

A muttered oath burst from the heir, he looked a moment at the pale, resolute face, then whirled suddenly, seized the key from the inside of the lock, and closing the door, locked it and put the key in his pocket.

"We will see, young woman, if there is not a way to bring you to terms. You will find you are not dealing with Doctor Morley now," said he from the outside, and then slowly descended the stairs.

Jane West went back and sat down by the window, which was in the third story of a rear wing.

"Now," said she, "if I have any wit it is the time for me to exercise it."

CHAPTER VII.

LORD ROLAND.

Miss Wainwright set herself at once upon the accomplishment of the errand which had brought her to London. She questioned the butler and housekeeper eagerly to know which was the most skillful physician in town, and was annoyed to find that their opinions varied, with equally good authority for the same.

Suddenly an idea came to her, and she turned in her peremptory fashion.

"Thomas, do you know whether either Lord or Lady Falkner are at their town residence?"

"I think they are, Miss Wainwright. I heard something from their footman about their coming to make ready for a journey to Scotland. Shall I go and see?"

"No, bring the carriage again, and I will go over at once. I remember hearing Lady Mary telling her sister about some physician whose cures were something magical. I will learn, if I can, where to find him."

The carriage was brought, and the lady entered it and was borne swiftly toward the stately square of aristocratic mansions.

The card of Miss Wainwright found Lady Mary Falkner just entered into the drawing-room with her few lady guests, leaving the gentlemen still at the dinner table. She was a tall woman, with stately presence, with a fair, refined face which still showed signs of its early beauty.

She took the card from the salver indifferently, but her face brightened as she read the name.

"Why, it is Octavia Wainwright. Of course I will see her, but what can this urgent matter be? My dear countess, you will excuse me a little while, I am sure. The dear girl has penned a line that her errand is of much importance."

This last was addressed to a very pompous and disagreeable looking woman in a stiff black satin dress, with a profusion of magnificent diamond ornaments.

"To be sure. But who is the person; not one of our set, of course. There is no such name in the peerage."

Lady Mary smiled quietly.

"She is a very charming person, and it is an old and wealthy family. Don't you know the Wainwrights, of Hertfordshire? Octavia is the sole heiress, and is a very accomplished and beautiful girl. If I can prevail upon her to stay, I will bring her in here. Lady Blanche, I am sure you will be good enough to sing some of your charming ballads for the ladies while I am absent, and I will tell James to send down the governess to accompany you, if you like. The music will best entice the gentlemen from their wine and cigars."

And having arranged for the entertainment of her guests, Lady Mary passed out toward the reception-room.

Octavia Wainwright turned an eager face toward her the moment the door unclosed.

My dear Lady Falkner, I beg that you will not think me presumptuous. I am now first aware that you have company in the house. I am very sorry that I have called you away from your guests."

"There is no occasion for you to be troubled, my dear," said her ladyship, kindly. "There are only a few friends who are to be in our party for Scotland. Let me beg of you to come up to the dressing-room and remove your wrappers. We shall all be delighted at such an acquisition to our circle. Spend the night with us, Octavia."

"Oh, no, it is impossible; many thanks, however, for your ladyship's kindness. I am tired, and anxious, and a little sad. I have come up by carriage this afternoon from Wainwright Slope. My father is ill. I am troubled about him, and dissatisfied with his physician, and that is my errand here. I heard you talking with Lady Frances Mainwaring about some physician whose cures were almost miraculous. It occurred to me when I was debating what London doctor to take down with me, and when I learned you were in town I came here at once. You know I was so anxious I could not trust the matter to any of the servants. If you will be so good as to give me his name I will go and leave you to return to your guests."

Lady Falkner looked sympathizingly into her pale face.

"My dear girl, it was too much for you to come here after the journey. Why did you not send for me?"

"I might have sent a note, but I fancied I could better understand from a personal interview. You remember, do you not, your ladyship?"

"I am trying to recall. Sir James Winston is our own family physician, but I am not sure he is any better or more skillful than several others. I was not aware I ever spoke of him in such positive terms."

"It was at the Viscountess Stanhope's dinner party. Lady Frances began the subject. I remembered it because

she seemed so enthusiastic. She said the wide world held not such another devotee to the healing art. She seemed to be telling you about him, as though she had seen him lately."

Her ladyship had taken the easy-chair beside her visitor, and her white hands, a-sparkle with gems, were dropped listlessly into her lap. At this speech of Octavia's a tremor ran through them, and the slender fingers clenched at the silken folds of her dress.

"Ah!" said she, "I remember now. It was all true what Lady Frances said, but it will not help you any, my dear girl. Sir Hugh, you know, had the governorship out there in Sydney, and Lady Frances was with him. It was of a doctor there she was speaking, a man, indeed, without a peer—Doctor Morley."

As she spoke the name her ladyship's voice fell a little, a little quiver crossed the face, the eyes took on a far-off, melancholy look.

Octavia Wainwright answered hastily in a voice of keen regret.

"Alas! I am deeply grieved to hear it. I have been resting so much faith and hope upon him, for I knew that neither you nor Lady Frances gave your praise lightly. I must do the best I can, then. You recommend me to take Sir James Winston?"

"We put our own family under his care. I am grieved for you, my dear; but I hope it is an unnecessary alarm. How long has General Wainwright been ill?"

"Several weeks; but I was not alarmed until to-day. How long, I wonder, would it take to send to Sydney and bring this Doctor Morley here?"

"Too long to be of any avail. Besides, no inducement would persuade him to leave. He is giving a life and genius that would bring him countless gold and high fame here in London to a hospital of those wretched convicts."

There were melancholy and bitterness both in her ladyship's voice.

"How very strange and unlike other practitioners," said Miss Wainwright.

"Arthur Morley is unlike all other men," returned Lady Falkner; "nobler, truer, worthier every way, and yet—" she added, the words slowly and drearily—"more unhappy and unfortunate than all others."

There was a moment's silence.

Miss Wainwright refrained from breaking it, for she saw the dreamy, abstracted look on the fair aristocratic face of her hostess.

The latter rose suddenly.

"But I must not give Ronald opportunity to reproach me for not allowing him a moment's speech with you. He will wish to speak with you, though it is only to say a single word."

She took a card from the silver tray, penciled a few lines upon it, and rang the bell.

"Give it to the butler, and tell him to hand it to Lord Ronald at the table," she commanded.

Octavia Wainwright made a dissenting gesture, but seemed to repent the moment after, for no words came from her lips. She had met Lord Ronald Falkner at the aristocratic gatherings of the past season, and though his rank and family were so much above her own, she had not failed to discover that he was strongly attached to whatever group she had chanced to join.

Lady Mary had taken unusual pains, besides, to be kind and friendly. Miss Wainwright was not too dull to guess that the Wainwright fortune, added to her own grace and beauty, would amply atone for the deficiency of rank, and that her ladyship would warmly welcome her as a daughter-in-law, thus making herself secure of any worse *mesalliance*,

of which there was naturally some danger with such a susceptible and somewhat wild young man as her son.

She found herself wondering vaguely if Lady Mary had heard any hint of the law suit so soon to come before the court; if she guessed any of the issues at stake, if *Middleton vs. Wainwright* was decided for the plaintiffs?

Lord Roland was young, fine looking, intelligent, and gentlemanly, only a little wild, and he was a peer, and his wife would be Lady Falkner, the mistress of a fine old mansion in the country, whose portrait gallery held faces that had smiled in life amid the regal scenes wherein they entertained a sovereign and the royal suite. Closely attached to the crown had the Falkners always been, and won many marks of royal favor, and though the revenues of the estate had somewhat fallen off, the family still held a high position among the nobility.

Octavia Wainwright was not one to forget or ignore all these advantageous circumstances. Her pride had been carefully fostered, and had grown with her years. Her ambition, too, was unbounded. She had a sort of creed that every person is obligated to rise as far as possible above the original station into which they are born. To step below, or stoop an inch, was treason or crime in her code. To win the envied position of Lady Falkner was as high a step as she could hope to make. She had never before been quite sure that it was in her power. Now, however, she read in Lady Mary's affectionate smile, and was confirmed by the glow which brightened the young lord's face when he came hastening into the room, that it was possible. How proud and glad such a triumph would make her father! Ah! but there was the case. *Middleton vs. Wainwright*. What if the plaintiff won? The very thought sent a slow shudder creeping through her veins.

But her sad smile was natural enough, and very charming in Lord Ronald's eyes.

“My dear Miss Wainwright, this is an unexpected honor and pleasure!” exclaimed he, coming forward with extended hand. “But why do I see you still in your hat and shawl? Mamma, I am sure you have been coaxing her to brighten our drawing-room this evening. What have you left unsaid, that I may try my eloquence?”

“Nothing, I am sure, that her kind hospitality could urge,” returned Miss Wainwright; “but it is quite impracticable. I am a more impulsive creature than people credit me. I rode in from home this afternoon to obtain for dear papa the very best physician, and I came for Lady Falkner’s advice in the selection.”

“General Wainwright ill? I am extremely pained to hear it. It is nothing really serious, I hope?”

Miss Wainwright cast down her eyes, and the red lip quivered.

“I did not think it was, until this afternoon, and now I am wretchedly nervous and frightened. He is all I have—my dear papa!”

“You must not be nervous, or you will be ill yourself. Mamma, I am sure Miss Wainwright ought to have a glass of wine, or a cup of tea. She looks so pale! I am going to excuse myself at the table; and then, Miss Wainwright, I shall go myself and see Sir James. He is crochety and stubborn at times, and I happen to know he objects to going out of town. I shall insist that he obeys your summons promptly.”

“Thank you. It is very kind in you to interest yourself for us. I shall return to Wainwright Slope as soon as possible in the morning, unless Sir James will go to-night.”

“Oh, no, Miss Wainwright! Think of the fatigue!” said the young lord, with a look of the most flattering anxiety.

“My dear girl,” added Lady Mary, “it would be the height of imprudence. Go, Ronald, to your guests. I shall

take Miss Wainwright up stairs with me, and coax her to take some refreshment. You, meanwhile, may find Sir James, and bring his report to us. You will consent, my dear?"

Octavia yielded gracefully.

An hour afterward, when she sat in Lady Mary's luxurious boudoir, confessing to herself how much she had been calmed and strengthened under the latter's delicate attentions and friendly care, Lord Ronald made his appearance, with the welcome tidings that Sir James would go to Wainwright Slope very early in the morning.

"Was he very reluctant," asked Octavia.

"Nothing more than his usual caprice. I believe doctors are the most tyrannical of mortals."

"Not all," said Lady Mary, suddenly, and the far-off look came again into her eyes.

"Ah, by the way, that reminds me. I saw Lady Frances yesterday, mamma, and she asked me if you had noticed the last advices from Australia. She gave me a little paragraph she had cut from a Sydney paper. It is in my diary."

He took out a little silver-clasped diary, found the printed slip between its leaves, and handed it to her.

Lady Mary had turned pale at the mention of Australia. She held the paper with a fierce clasp, and without a word walked into the little dressing-room beyond, closing the door noiselessly behind her.

There was a pretty bay-window, sumptuously curtained, and a light vine from the ceiling, through its dainty porcelain morning glow, lapped a tongue of flame which illuminated the cozy retreat.

Lady Falkner entered it and dropped the curtains behind her.

"News from *him*, of course," she murmured. "I think I guess the import. He has married at last."

She spread out the crumpled morsel, read the first line,

and, throwing up her arms wildly, staggered against the wall.

“Dead! dead! Arthur Morley dead! Oh, pitiful Heaven!”

The dressing-maid in the room beyond heard a slight cry, and came into the room to find her mistress lying between the curtains parted by her fall, with closed eyes and clenched hands, nearly if not quite insensible.

Her assiduous efforts restored consciousness.

Lady Mary's pale lips asked, hastily:

“You have alarmed no one, Delicie?”

“No, your ladyship.”

“That is well. It was very thoughtful of you. Bring me a cordial and a glass of cold water. I shall be better presently. I must go down to the drawing-room, for the countess will be exceedingly indignant. Make my excuses to Miss Wainwright, and say that I beg of her to remain to-night.”

She took the cordial and drank eagerly of the water, and then Delicie went into the boudoir to perform her errand.

Lady Falkner clasped her hands across her heart, and murmured, in a voice of unutterable anguish:

“Dead! dead! and never a word of forgiveness for me! Too late! too late for forgiveness or atonement! Oh, Arthur Morley, hard as your fate was, it has been bliss in comparison to mine! You have gone to obtain a saint's, a martyr's reward, and I—live on in gilded misery, hiding my hateful secret, concealing my remorseful woe!”

She sat there a little longer, pale, weary, languid; but when Delicie returned, she said, hastily:

“You must get me a glass of wine, Delicie, and I believe you may touch my cheeks with rouge. And perhaps you had better give me your arm to the drawing-room door. I must get through the evening somehow. Are the gentle-

men out from the dining-room? And what did Miss Wainwright say?"

"She was just going, my lady. She left her thanks for your kindness. Lord Ronald escorted her to the carriage. I think the gentlemen are all in the drawing-room. Miss Anstruther is playing and Lady Florence singing."

"Then I need not hurry. Only a little rouge—just enough to hide my pallor. Be ready to get me speedily to bed when I am able to escape; I shall be worn out and exhausted, I know. There, you are a good girl, Delicie. I am tired of those jet bracelets, and you may take them. You will not mention this illness to any one?"

"No, my lady, certainly not. But it is wicked that you should be obliged to go down to-night."

"There are a great many wicked things in this world, Delicie, child," said Lady Falkner, and sighed—oh, so drearily.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I COUNTED THE COST."

"Middleton vs. Wainwright" had not attracted so much public attention, because of the secrecy with which the plaintiff had conducted the case. He did not talk over his affairs in any public places; he made no appeal for sympathy, nor in any way spread abroad the particulars of the case. This was owing mostly to the careful instructions of his eldest son, although Mr. John Middleton himself was naturally a reticent man.

Those, of course, familiar with the talk in and about the court-house, understood that a great and important question was pending, but somehow the immediate friends and acquaintances of the Wainwrights did not get hold of the

matter. The case came on, then, without any remarkable attendance to listen to the testimony, beyond those immediately interested.

General Wainwright had fumed and rebelled, declaring that he himself must be present, and had daunted physician and nurse both by his fierce resentment of their well-meant expostulations. He threw first one pillow, and then the other at his valet who stood hesitating to obey the order to bring him a riding-suit, and finally leaped out of bed, rage lending him the strength which would otherwise have failed him, and rushed into the dressing-room. Mrs. Willis retreated to the door in dismay and alarm; the valet stood trembling, and the doctor angry, when Miss Wainwright came in upon the stormy scene.

The calm blue eyes widened and dilated. She lifted a lily hand commandingly, but she spoke sweetly and tenderly.

"My dear father, it is very imprudent of you to leave your bed to-day. I am hoping that I shall have the pleasure of escorting you to my boudoir next week; but if you are so careless as this I am afraid of disappointment. Let me help you back, sir. I know it is very hard to be patient so long, but disregard of the doctor's commands will only put off the date of recovery."

The irascible general stood looking at her half indignantly, half imploringly.

"It is important that I should be there at the trial, Octavia. I shall ride every step of the way, and be warmly dressed. It will be far worse to be shut up here fretting and pining, knowing things may go wrong."

"But you must not fret or fume. You have confidence in Screw & Scattergood, and did you not promise to leave it all in my hands? I am going to be present myself. I will bring you a full and faithful report of the proceedings. Dixon, help your master back to his bed."

With a face crest-fallen and humiliated like that of a scolded child the old man returned to bed.

"If you are going, it is another thing," he muttered, and turned his face to the pillow.

She bent down and kissed him, and said softly, in a voice of unutterable tenderness:

"Dear papa, don't think I am a tyrant; but I cannot afford to allow any risk to your precious life. Who has but one treasure guards it jealously."

The look and the words were more potent than the man's own imperious will. His vexation and anger dropped away from him. The querulous lines smoothed away from his lips, a tender glance illumined his eye.

"Octavia, my darling! my darling!" repeated he.

"Dear papa, you are going to rest quiet and easy. You know how much emphasis Sir James left upon those orders. It will pay me a poor compliment if you cannot trust me to look after this matter. I shall come home with good tidings. And do you do your part by being calm and quiet."

"I will do my best, Octavia. How will you go? Whom will you take for escort?"

"I am not sure that I need any; but Felix, no doubt, would go, if I asked him. I do not care to take any of our acquaintances, to have the affair gossiped over by and by, and continually brought to remembrance."

"Felix will do very well. Take him, by all means, and select a retired seat, where you will not be annoyed by the stares of those insolent Middletons.

Octavia's red lip curled.

"I am not afraid of the Middletons, and I do not believe they will dare to annoy me with a single look, after they once meet my glance of scorn. But remember your part of the contract, to have a quiet day and night. And now, good-day. The carriage will be waiting."

She kissed him again, and left him, looking wistfully and fondly after her.

She looked into the library, but Felix was not there. He came down the stairs, however, just as she was crossing the hall below, and she noticed at once that he was more carefully dressed than usual.

“Are you going away? I was just about to ask for your company to hear the testimony in this curious trial which commences to-day,” she said, carelessly. “Perhaps you will not care to go?”

“On the contrary, I am very anxious to be present,” he answered, coloring slightly; “though I did not expect to accompany you.”

“Are you ready now? The carriage is waiting, I believe.”

“Quite ready,” was the brief reply, as he took her shawl from the maid’s arm, and led the way out.

Miss Wainwright was conscious of something peculiar in his look, but was hardly interested enough to fathom it. She settled herself among the cushions of the carriage, leaned back her head, and dropped her veil.

Felix was equally abstracted and silent.

As the carriage drew up before the building in which the judge of the shire held his court, the latter started nervously, and said hastily, in a voice half-stifled with some mysterious emotion:

“Miss Wainwright, if this trial should conclude in a different manner than you expect, I wish you would remember that—that I am your friend——”

She put up her veil to look curiously into his face, and said, half disdainfully:

“Of course, I do not expect you are an enemy, Felix. And as for the trial, I have told you, before this, that I am not afraid.”

Felix sat gnawing impatiently at his lip.

Oh, would it not be something to see this haughty, imperious creature humiliated and humbled? Amid his passionate love there ran a wild thrill of anger and resentment. He could rejoice in her downfall, though he meant his should be the hand to lift her back to pride and power.

Nothing more was said. She dropped her vail, and was assisted from the carriage.

Felix followed her, and found a good seat for her in the visitors' gallery.

Proceedings had already commenced, and testimony been introduced to prove Mr. John Middleton's identity as the son of a certain Augustus Middleton, whose change of name was likewise well established. To one not vitally interested the testimony elucidated was rather dull and monotonous.

Miss Wainwright, however, never moved her eyes from the scene, nor lost a word. Felix knew, by her attitude and the poise of her stately head, that she was giving breathless attention. He was thankful when the warmth of the air induced her to throw aside the heavy vail which concealed the expression of her face, and watched her narrowly, irritated at the tranquil calmness there, when for himself the blood seemed seething and boiling in his veins. He saw her lip curl disdainfully when his father moved around, and whispered a word with his counsel. The lawyers on the defendant's side looked unconcerned likewise.

Felix searched over their sphinx faces for an explanation, but did not find it.

"Do they think we have been playing a child's game," thought he, "or have they obtained an inkling of Merle's disappearance according to Miss Wainwright's conjecture? They do not guess the card we mean to play. But I wish I knew what trump they are themselves holding back."

Scattergood announced that the defendants demanded

proof of the said Augustus Middleton's legal marriage, averring that it was utterly and thoroughly denied by them, and that the whole case hinged upon this matter.

The counsel for the plaintiff replied that it was their purpose to bring forward a witness whose testimony would have established the validity of the marriage beyond any questioning. They had been waiting impatiently for his appearance. It was possible he was now in the court-room among the spectators, although his failure to meet the early appointment gave them serious alarm.

The name was called, clearly and distinctly. Every one in the great room heard it.

Mathew Merle, of Calcutta.

Utter stillness and a long hush, broken only by the movement of people looking all around to discover any signs of the missing witness, followed, but there was no response.

Mathew Merle, of Calcutta, was not there.

Octavia Wainwright showed her first sign of excitement. A little red spot gathered on the lily of her cheek. She turned her stately head and glanced at Felix with a meaning smile.

He was clenching his hands merely to conceal how his limbs were trembling.

"Wait a moment, my proud lady," was his inward cry.

Looking very grave and annoyed, the counsel for the plaintiff went on to say that under this unexpected turn of affairs, his next best movement was to introduce a witness who had heard the said Mathew Merle declare that there was no chance for doubting the claim of the Middletons over the present incumbents for the Wainwright property; who had twice listened to Merle's solemn assertion that he himself was present at the marriage of Augustus Middleton, *nee* Wainwright.

Accordingly James Ferguson was brought to the stand;



"OH, SIR, FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN, HELP ME, BE MY FRIEND!"—(P. 109.)

a slim, rather unprepossessing man of middle age, but he was a grand witness, clear, unwavering, concise. The most adroit cross-questioning did not shake his testimony. This Mathew Merle had solemnly assured him that he himself was present at the marriage; had declared that General Geoffrey Wainwright had no valid claim to the property, and showed him plainly how the grandson of Augustus Middleton was the true heir before any children of his younger brother.

There was no question that this witness made a deep impression.

Felix turned his glittering eye upon Miss Wainwright, and was startled to find that though her beautiful color had fled from her face she was still cool and smiling.

His card was played and it was not a trivial or worthless one. Now what was coming from the other side? Something of importance—he felt it, he knew it, and he could have shaken his father for the triumphant air with which he looked over to Scattergood, who was twirling a pencil carelessly in his fingers.

Scattergood only made a little signal to his associate, who went out for a moment into the anteroom, and returning, produced a witness for their own side. A legal practitioner from a neighboring town, who, after taking the oath, stood ready to respond to the questioning.

“Do you know the last witness, the man still standing below by the side of the pillar?”

“I do. It is James Ferguson, son of Noah and Catherine Ferguson, of Cornwall.”

“State the circumstances of your acquaintance with him.”

“I was counsel for the crown in a suit brought against him for forgery.”

“How did the suit end?”

“In the sentence of James Ferguson to five year’s imprisonment.”

Every word fell clear and distinct. The witness stood a moment waiting for any cross-questioning, bowed, and stepped aside.

Scattergood smiled grimly at the row of astonished, crest-fallen faces on the other side, and before they had recovered from their confusion had called another witness, the keeper of a jail in Cornwall, who testified that James Ferguson had served out his sentence under his care.

Ferguson himself, after turning into as many colors as a chameleon, suddenly darted into the anteroom, and John Middleton followed, raging.

Felix felt the salt taste of the blood oozing from the lip into which he had set his teeth savagely. His trump card worthless! The testimony that was to win the case, and give him Octavia Wainwright, set aside entirely. He could have cursed himself for his stupidity. Why had he not taken pains to ascertain the antecedents of the man he had taken such pains to put into Mathew Merle’s place. He counted over what that man had already cost them, and here he was, incompetent to testify. No wonder Octavia Wainwright despised him.

He glanced over to her and saw the haughty face still sedate and calm, but there was exultant triumph in her eye.

“She planned it all. She has known it all the time,” thought he, and for all the fierceness of his rage could not but give his tribute of admiration.

When the proceedings ended by the Middletons, after a hasty consultation, yielding the case for the present, with a threatening hint to bring overwhelming evidence to a second trial, Felix escorted Miss Wainwright to her carriage.

An iron statue could scarcely have looked more stiff, and grim, and hard than Felix as he took the seat opposite, while she had never been more radiant and dazzling.

Smiles were chasing across her face, her eyes sparkled, her cheeks glowed. She was so happy, so wrapped up in her own pleasant thought, for some little time she gave no heed to him, but presently she turned:

“Ah, Felix, it will be better than all the medicine, when I get back to papa and tell him that his anxieties may end. Is it not glorious for me to go back to him with these tidings?”

“I do not know as you are safe to say so much as that,” answered he, without turning his averted face to look at her. “It may only be a question of time. The Middletons are in earnest, and think they have the right on their side. It was a poor trick, after all, which saved you. That Ferguson’s testimony was correct, only his character ruined its acceptance. I think you will hear from them sooner or later.”

She glanced sharply toward him, but answered gayly:

“I am not afraid of them. They must hunt up this Mathew Merle whom they have set adrift. I think,” and here her laugh rippled out again, “I think, Mr. Felix Thorne *Middleton*, even you will admit that I am a match for you.”

Felix turned his face now and showed it to her, ghastly beneath emotion.. The eyes held a red glow under the iris, the lips looked like those of a dead person.

“You know—you know,” faltered he—since when?”

“Since a week ago—the night, in fact, when you brought your reliable Mr. Ferguson to see that old man, Mathew Merle.”

A cry that was like a wail broke from his lips.

“Miss Wainwright! Octavia! if you are able to pierce so deep into a man’s guarded secrets, you must see and know the rest. Does it rouse in you no compassion, no mercy, to see how fierce and consuming is that passion of mine? You know—you cannot help knowing, that to win you I

would peril my life a thousand times, and risk something even more sacred, my very soul's salvation. Dare you, knowing so much, spurn me from you?"

She did not answer him, only sighed once, and the animated glow on her face faded out.

Felix looked at the proud, beautiful face, while a passion of rage, and indignation, and fierce love swept over him, shaking him as the tempest flutters a leaf. When it was over, he was stern and frigid.

As they drew up at the great door of the Wainwright mansion, he sprang out, assisted her with punctilious politeness to descend, and then stood, hat in hand, while she turned to ascend the stone steps.

"Be good enough to say to the general, Miss Wainwright, that unexpected circumstances will oblige me to terminate my engagement with him. If there is anything which requires my attention, he can send to this address."

He penciled a hasty line on a card, and laid it on the gloved hand.

Octavia turned, and looked at him in profound astonishment.

"What! are you not coming into the house?"

"No, Miss Wainwright; never again under the same roof with your hard heart and scornful eyes. I wish you good-evening."

He turned swiftly, and was gone.

She stood at the head of the steps, looking after him.

"Poor Felix!" murmured she; and then she added, mentally: "I shall miss him; the house will be dull without him."

She went slowly into the hall, straight up the stairs, into her father's chamber. There her new gravity fell away, and the radiance and animation returned.

The invalid's face showed how he had watched and

waited, as well as the worn and jaded countenance of poor Willis betrayed the trying day she had spent.

Octavia swept up to the bedside, her sparkling eyes telling all without the need of an articulated word.

General Wainwright sat up in bed, and drew one long, shuddering breath of relief from a terrible load.

"We are safe, Octavia, my darling! You have brought me good news!"

"Yes, papa, just what I promised you; and yet you have not kept faith with me. You have fretted and chafed, and had no trust."

"Tell it over to me!" he cried, eagerly.

She sat down beside the bed, both hands holding his, and patiently repeated it all.

"Screw and Scattergood are keen as briars!" he cried, jubilantly. "Who but they would have ferreted out the antecedents of that Ferguson, or kept such sharp watch of the enemy's movements?"

She smiled quietly, and did not tell him whose quick sagacity had put the threads of evidence into the lawyers' hands.

"I am very tired," said she, presently.

"My poor darling! and I am selfishly keeping you here. Go for rest and refreshment, and you may say good-night now. I shall sleep without tormenting dreams to-night."

Miss Wainwright gathered up her shawl, kissed him, and went away. When her dressing-maid had made her comfortable in her own room, she leaned her head back against the cushions of the easy-chair, and closed her eyes.

Her meditations, however, were not agreeable, for a frown, or a shudder, rather, knit a moment the arched eyebrows, and drew down the scarlet lips.

"I counted the cost in the commencement," murmured she. "It is weakness to be stabbing myself with reproaches now."

Shortly after, she spoke again: "Poor Felix! I shall miss him!"

The general, as he prophesied, passed an unusually comfortable night. His daughter, on the contrary, lay awake, staring, with dry, feverish eyes, into the dimness.

CHAPTER IX.

BRAVE JENNY WREN.

"Now," said Jane West, "if I have any woman's wit, I must find it. Here I am, locked in my room, three windows up from the ground, and below are those two men, cruel, wicked creatures, inebriated with the worst of all intoxication, the maddened thirst for gold. This is only the commencement of my persecution. No one can say to what lengths they may push it, and I am here alone, a single, weaponless woman, to defend myself against two men, with the advantages all on their side. Of course I am justified in using strategy, and I am at perfect liberty to depart. My master, who alone had the power of controlling my actions, lies dead—woe is me!—and has no further need of me, except for this thing, to save that packet from those prying eyes and greedy hands. I will do it. Just now I do not see the way, but the knowledge will come. And they shall not obtain from me the cordial recipe—no, not if they stretch me on a rack and torture me to obtain a single hint."

She went to the window and looked out sharply and scrutinizingly. The distance to the ground did not daunt her. She was confident that she could manufacture a rope to let her down safely. But the question was how to get into the lower story without arousing any one, and to get also to the inside of Dr. Morley's secretaire.

The one under-servant belonging to the establishment was a new woman, only a short time out from serving a sentence for theft, who had only been there a month. Ah! if old Martha were back again it would have easily been managed. But Martha had gone home to England to die and be buried among her kindred. Sore as was her need of the faithful old creature's co-operation, Jane could not find heart to regret the fact, and her eye moistened, remembering whose thoughtful care had sent the poor creature home. The present woman, without doubt, would be easily modeled to the new master's will. Yes, it was very certain she must rely entirely upon herself.

Jane West did not weep, and moan, and bewail her hard fate. She did not sink down, weak and helpless, nor faint away, nor use any of the other useless and pitiable methods by which a certain style of distressed damsels meet such an exigency. She set her lips together a little more resolutely; the hazel eyes dried off the tears of grieved affection and shone firm and steady.

"It must be done," she said, "and *I* must do it."

Then, under cover of the curtain, she put out her head and looked carefully over the whole wall of the house. In a moment the light she asked for broke upon her. She smiled triumphantly.

"I can lower myself to the ground, then I can climb up the great tin water-spout and get upon the roof. The trap-door there is never locked, and I can get through it into the house. Just after midnight will be the time. I wish I had taken dinner. I need to be strong and steady. I wonder if they intend to starve me."

She went to the door and began knocking loudly and persistently, and, as she anticipated, the disturbance brought one of the jailers in hot haste.

"What are you after? What are you making this confounded noise for?" demanded the new master, indignantly,

from the top of the stairs. "If you don't want to be put in narrower quarters yet, you had best be quiet."

"I wish to ask you by what authority you restrain the liberty of an innocent person. I can demand the protection of the governor. I have had no food to-day, and you have locked me here where I can obtain none," was the reply, in quiet but resolute tones.

"She is a tartar," muttered Mr. Aaron Morley, and went down the stairs again. Jane guessed that he had left her to her fate, and began knocking again. She was not surprised, therefore, at sounds of his return. He unlocked the door, took a tray of food from the hands of the servant who had accompanied him, and brought it in and put it on the table.

"There is food," he said. "I would like to treat you well, if you would let me. Come, girl, be reasonable. This recipe is my right, and I ought to have it. It is ridiculous in you to refuse me. Should you attempt to make your own fortune out of it, I shall straightway bring a suit against you."

"I told you, sir, that Doctor Morley especially instructed me that no fortune should ever be made from it. I shall never use it, unless such an unlikely thing as becoming rich should allow me. Then I would come back to Sydney, make the cordial, and give it, as he had done, for the poor and suffering."

"Meantime, as you are not rich, the sick people must go without it," said he, restraining for the time the expression of his anger.

He saw the look of distress on her face, brought there by this new suggestion, and followed up the advantage.

"Yes; think of the poor creatures you condemn to suffering, possibly to death, by this foolish and obstinate whim. How dare you be so cruel and inhuman."

Jane looked down, perplexed for a moment.

Would it be right after all? The poor people had better pay their hard-earned money for it, rather than not have it at all. Suddenly there came to her, so suddenly that it seemed like a whisper from an invisible presence, the remembrance of a day when Doctor Morley and she had been filling bottles with the precious cordial.

“Jenny Wren,” said the doctor, “do you know if you were assistant doctor anywhere else, you would be putting in cunning adulterations here, and weakening there, and resorting to all those miserable sutberfuges which lessen the cost of an article of merchandise, and thus add to the profit? So artful and dishonest is this poor human nature of ours, when once it is clutched in the evil grasp of Mammon. Child, child, you do not know this poor, tricky world of ours. I verily believe not one man in one hundred who undertook our cordial but would spoil its virtue, in trying to make it profitable.”

This man before her was just one of those men who woke the scorn of that noble soul. In his hands, the cordial would degenerate, become the imposition Doctor Morley had hated.

Jane looked up no longer irresolute.

The man thought he had conquered, and a glow brightened his face, but the fierce scowl came back before her sentence was finished.

“I have no right to depart from Doctor Morley’s instructions. I would cut off my hand before I would let it write that recipe for you.”

“It may be cut off without your help,” muttered the baffled heir. “I tell you I have a right to the recipe, and you shall give it to me.”

And he closed the door, against which he had planted himself, locked it once more, and went down to his confederate.

Jane sat down to her dinner and ate heartily; after a

somewhat scrutinizing examination of the food. After that she set herself to work, and with the aid of scissors, and needle, and thread, and an unscrupulous resort to the blankets of her bed, she had manufactured a rope strong enough to bear twice her weight. She rolled it up with a sigh of satisfaction, and concealed it under the coverlet, murmuring, as she put it to bed tenderly:

“Lie there till midnight. Then you must be the wings to give poor Jenny Wren her freedom.”

Next she made up a little bundle, and packed it into a small carpet-bag as completely as possible, and when that was done, she looked over her little stock of money, and carefully reckoned up the amount due her demand upon the bank. She blessed again the generous care which had always laid her wages every Saturday night into her own hand. It footed up a larger sum than she expected. She felt rich, and exclaimed, joyfully:

“I can go where I please; to England first to deliver the package, and afterward whither my heart has yearned, believing that there a free and generous welcome awaits every one in whatever path they choose to win their bread—afterward to America! I can do both and not be dependent upon charity, though I do not find work promptly.”

And then Jane West, as the darkness gathered, went around looking up little tokens of remembrance to take with her upon this long and untried journey she was planning. First there was the little carved box, filled with old trinkets, some of wood, some of bone and ivory, but all the work of loving hands which had solaced many an otherwise dreary hour, and wrought for her alone. They were her father's gifts to a little child, but were more precious to Jane West than diamonds and gold ornaments, love gifts to many other maidens.

Doctor Morley had taken pains to show to her the great anguish of her father's heart, and his deep affection for his

motherless little one, and that death-bed in the hospital held a halo for for the lovely woman beyond many a proud noble's coronet. She kissed the box as she packed it away. Then she turned to a stand well filled with books. These had been presented by Doctor Morley. She hung over them with a yearning tenderness. She could only take a few. Which should be left behind? Alas! it was like a mother trying to select from her children which should be given away. She took them down, replaced them, sighed, well-nigh cried over the task, and finally shut her eyes, and selected thus blindly half a dozen. She hurried them into the carpet-bag without looking at them.

"I will not know which I have taken until I am safely away. And now what else?"

Ah, there was the envelope in the drawer, a yellow thing containing papers and copies of documents which proved her as the legitimate daughter of one Robert West, and his wife, Ann Thurston West. She sighed as she put the envelope into her Bible, remembering the care Doctor Morley had taken to hunt them out from the illy kept records, and his charge for her to keep them choicely, since who could tell what might happen that she should need them?

At last all was done. She sat down wearily by the window, and saw when the two men went out into the garden, and looked up curiously toward her window, probably to see if it was lighted.

"I can afford to sleep three hours at least," she thought. "It will not do to waste any strength in unnecessary wakefulness."

And she went obediently to the couch and lay down. It was easier to assume the attitude than obtain sleep. The brain was so wide awake with new and startling projects, the heart was so stirred from its accustomed calm, and at the best she only dozed. The clock in the hall below rang out the hours into a mindful ear, and as it struck two Jane

West slipped noiselessly from the bed, caught her breath, not nervously, but with a deep inspiration, as if to obtain all possible strength, and crept on.

The window was open as it had been all day. She glided softly to the chair, and leaning out examined carefully to see if there was any ray of light to be discovered anywhere. All was dark and silent. The small carpet-bag was on the chair, the rope already knotted to the bedstead. The two windows below were fortunately belonging to rooms unlikely to be occupied. Her worst apprehension was the noise she would be likely to make in swinging herself over the casement. She had provided a shorter rope to fasten about her waist to steady herself by. She knotted it carefully, and tied the carpet-bag to her back.

Everything was ready, and still all was silence. Jane paused and covered her face with her hands; not in weakness or terror, but to breathe a short prayer for Heaven's help. That done, she swung boldly out, seized the rope with one hand, steadying herself into the right position with the other; and when she was sure of herself she cut the support away, and slipped downward, touching as lightly as possible against the wall of the house. All was done in her steady, calculating way. She stood safely on the ground, and listened. No stir except the wind in the bows of the cape pines whispered to them of the strange doings below.

Thus far she was safe. She might fly now if she would and no harm would come. Did the temptation come to leave the mysterious box to its fate? Not an instant. Doctor Morley was in Jane West's thoughts all the time she was doing this. Two Doctor Morleys, one pale, earnest, eager, telling her how this secret of his must be saved from meddling hands, and one cold and still, with closed eyes, and silent lips, and powerless limbs. He trusted it to her, cost what it might. Jenny Wren meant it should be done. She

crept around the house toward the great water spout. Fate was kind to her; the spout was held to its place by stout tin rings with flanges nailed to the house. She mounted upon the first without difficulty, and exploring upward with her hand, discovered there was another within her reach.

Jane West gave her blessing to the artisan who had taken so much pains to secure the spout to the building, and vaguely wondered if it was not more a providential accident than because that corner of the building was exposed to the strong winds, which were sometimes nearly hurricanes. At all events they made an upright ladder by which she drew herself safely to the top. The roof was flat, and in the dim light she saw the scuttle half opened. She crept safely to it, and stepped through, holding her very breath as she descended the stairs. At the foot of the short flight she sat down to rest, and removed her shoes from her feet, putting them in the carpet bag still strapped upon her shoulders. She felt in her pocket for the taper she had taken care to provide. All safe.

Thus far everything had progressed favorably, but the most difficult task was yet to come, to pass the doors behind which those two men slept, and one she guessed occupied Doctor Morley's old room which opened from the office, as it was always called, where the doctor had received his patients and pursued his studies, and into the latter apartment her errand led her. She sat there in the darkness, pale, but not trembling or faint-hearted. She went over her contemplated movements thoughtfully and decided that the first must be to unbolt the street door of the office, that in case of a surprise she might have all possible help to escape. She said her little childish prayer for help also, and then she rose and softly and stealthily crept down into the second story. One of her foes, at least, was safely out of the way—his loud snoring breath came through the thick door-way at regular intervals, like the ticking of a clock.

On she sped and descended the next flight. Here was her danger. She had an instinctive consciousness that the heir kept in close proximity to the paper and effects in Doctor Morley's office. Her brave heart began to beat now in quicker pulsations, but she laid her hand firmly on the knob of the office door. It came to her with the shivery sense of the change in all things, how often and often her hand had known that contact, as she had gone in and out from Doctor Morley's kindly presence, and it almost seemed that the senseless metal must know she was taking now her final leave. Did her steady hand tremble at last? The door creaked sharply. She leaned silently against the casement, all her faculties merged into one, listening for the slightest sound or stir.

Once her heart gave a desperate leap. She thought some one moved in the room beyond, but as there came no renewal, she said to herself it was only her imagination. Then she crept into the room. *The* room of all the house, impregnated, saturated, pervaded with Doctor Morley. She did not need a light to know its looks. Oh, how deeply every minutest object was imprinted in her memory! There in the center of the room was the long table, on one end the case of surgical instruments, and the tray of writing materials on the other. There were the two sides, solid to the ceiling, with row upon row of books, many of them rare and costly, and not one among them light or trivial, and the great case, with glass doors, filled every shelf with vials and powders, stood between the windows. And there was the great globe in its brass stand, and the array of philosophical and chemical apparatus, and the mounted skeleton keeping grim guard over against the secretaire.

Everything was so familiar, so much more beautiful to Jenny Wren than the costliest drawing-room in the land. It cut to her heart with a terrible pang to realize, as she did fully and entirely, that she had no more part in it. That it

was an empty shell, from which the living principle had flown. But it was not the time to bewail now. Softly as a fairy she stole across the room, and laid her hand on the secretaire. The key was in the door, which saved her a little time, though she had provided a duplicate which the master of the secretaire had intrusted to her care a year ago.

She turned it softly and cautiously, opened the door, and explored with her hand within.

Everything had been disarranged, but she was seeking for a little ivory knob, ostensibly there to hang the diary on, but really the cover of a spring which disclosed the secret drawer.

Doctor Morley had taught her how it operated, and it was there, she knew, the mysterious package which was to be saved from careless hands, and carried by herself to its unknown destination. She did not feel alarmed about its present safety. Something seemed to assure her that Mr. Aaron Morley had not discovered the spring or the secret drawer to which it admitted.

She found the knob and pressed it firmly. The lid which concealed the aperture dropped with a sharp click. Jane stood motionless again, and she was all ear. Once more she fancied there was a sound; she could not tell if it was a rustling movement or a soft breath near her.

She examined the room as thoroughly as the dim light would allow. There was certainly a vibration of the skeleton. Did a ghost animate the rattling bones at such an uncanny hour?

Jane West was a steady, healthy young woman; a whole army of ghosts would not have frightened away her courage. She had a quick suspicion of a far more dangerous visitor, and plunged her hands hastily into the secret drawer. It was nearly full, and the darkness confused her; there seemed to be two boxes, and how was she to know which was the

right one? Under the consciousness of a spy at hand, she dared not use the taper. She did what seemed the only thing possible under the circumstances; she gathered all the contents of the drawer at one swoop, and thrust them into her pocket, and then she turned. One swift prayer for help and protection flashed instantaneously through her mind as she sped along, for she knew what was coming.

"Hold, Miss Jane West!" shouted a scornful, triumphant voice. "Not so fast, if you please, my dear."

There was the scratch of a match on the wall, and a flash of light which kindled into a broad glow, and the room was illuminated.

There stood Mr. Aaron Morley, with a dressing-gown thrown hastily about him, with glittering eyes and flushed face, glaring upon her in evil triumph; and there was Jane West, pale as a ghost, but steady and resolute, in the attitude of an animal at bay. She did not pause for further questioning, but bounded to the door, sped through, and clanged it after her.

With an oath, Aaron Morley was after her.

Jane ran along the corridor into the little entry, and seized upon the door, blessing the foresight which had unbolted and set it ajar.

Out in the cool night air she seemed to gain renewed strength. She ran along the deserted street like a young fawn, somehow fearless and exultant. She had it safe, the secret which Doctor Morley had left to her care. She had escaped from her odious jailer. What need disturb her beyond?

Escape? Ah, there was the heavy, plunging footstep behind, and when he finds that it is not swift enough to overtake her, he sets up a hoarse cry:

"Help! help! Stop thief! Ho! watchman! A thief! a thief!"

Jane West turned one moment to look at the bawler, all

the blood stinging and burning through her veins in utter scorn and contempt.

“He calls other help. He will not give me an even chance. I a woman, and he a man. Shame upon the caitiff!” muttered she through her shut teeth.

And then, as she heard the hastening steps of the watchman before, and the plunging stride of the foe behind, she turned, bounded lightly over a garden wall, skimmed across a rear yard, up and down steps, and was again in the street, and nearer the water.

She had in mind the sort of retreat needed, but was cut off from that quarter. Meanwhile the excitement deepened, and the pursuing force gained half a dozen recruits. She could hear them closing in upon her on three sides. They were pressing her nearer and nearer the water. Now, indeed it was growing a desperate thing.

Poor Jenny wished, indeed, for a wren's wing to help her out of this sore distress. Not that, on her own account, she was afraid to face Aaron Morley and the whole force of Sydney police. But to do that, would be to yield up to the greedy hands of his uncongenial brother the treasured secret of Doctor Morley, and to betray the sacred trust he had left to her. If there was anything left in life precious to her, it was this conviction that it was in her power still to serve Doctor Morley. She pushed on, therefore, one hand clasping within her pocket the little package so boldly obtained, and in a moment more stood at the water's edge. How still and peaceful it was! The soft slipping of the waves was like a tender whisper; the stars shone down like dreamy, loving, mother-eyes; an infinite sweetness, even in the midst of her alarm and excitement, stole into Jane West's spirit. It was something as though a cool hand had been laid upon her forehead in solemn benediction.

The hoarse shouts, the rude cry, the rushing steps came

on, but she looked up into the sky with a trustful, happy glance.

"I will do my best, Doctor Morley," murmured she.

And then she saw a boat, rocking with the waves, only a little beyond. It was but a moment's work to reach it, cast off, and push out from shore.

What strength there was in her arms! What brave courage and resolution in her heart.

Farther and farther from the shore, and the shouting and bustle—away from the pursuing foe! Away out in the cove, clear against the sky, loomed up the graceful figure of a ship. It was Jane West's goal of desire. She said to herself she would reach it, shutting those even teeth of hers together savagely, if she was obliged to leap into the water and swim to it.

But the pursuers were behind. They also had found a boat, and two pairs of strong arms propelled the oars.

CHAPTER X.

THE LIVELY JANE.

The Sea Foam rather failed of her accustomed good fortune. She had head winds, and was twice becalmed. Captain Lo mentally accused himself of bringing a Jonah conscience with him, and was gloomily prepared for anything disastrous.

He was a thoroughly miserable man, was Captain Lo Leyard, so unlike his usual hearty, generous, cheery self, that it was no wonder the crew began to whisper from one to another that the skipper was bewitched. Singularly enough, he found his chief consolation in the society of the chief object of his disquiet. Aside from a certain morbid compassion, Captain Lo had learned to love the youthful

passenger almost as well as if he had been that son whose sad dereliction had brought about the fatal temptation which had overmastered a sailor's rectitude.

Will Yarrel, indeed, had won all hearts on board the *Sea Foam*. And yet he was shy and retiring in his manners, and certainly made no effort to appeal to their compassion. He would sit an hour at a time with his hands clasped listlessly, the sad brown eyes fixed afar upon the distant line where sea and sky mingled into one misty blue; but if any sought to probe the wound, which it was plain to see rankled in the youthful breast, he drew back, singularly sensitive and disturbed and made no confidant—never once.

Captain Lo was often vexed with the lad, when, in the midst of some earnest, confidential talk, which seemed to call for some reference to personal matters, he would suddenly draw back, a sort of chilly veil dropping over the face that had a moment before been sparkling with animation, and then the dreamy melancholy would return. But second reflection made the remorseful man thoughtful to the lad.

He had affection and sympathy enough now for the lonely passenger. If there was any deeper grief behind, it was better he should know nothing about it.

They were approaching the dreaded island, slipping steadily southward, following the track to Brazil, until they should get out of the S. E. trade wind, and be taken by the friendly South Atlantic current, and borne eastward around Good Hope into the Indian Ocean.

Captain Lo picked out his course on the chart, and looked shiveringly at the little black speck marked down at the left of Martan Vaz Rocks. They were bearing down upon it steadily. In two days more they would be sure to make the high gray line of coast. As if to tantalize him, the wind, which had been light and fitful, freshened up,

and they dashed away gallantly. Captain Lo paced the deck the night previous to the discovery of the expected land, and when, at daybreak, the man from the mast-head shouted out the animated cry, "Land o'," he turned deadly pale, and rushed down into the cabin. Will Yarrel sat there reading, and lifted the sorrowful brown eye, inquiringly, at the master's precipitate appearance.

"We've sighted Trinidad," stammered Captain Lo.

"Trinidad—you don't mean—of course you can't mean one of the Antilles. We are nowhere in that track," said the youth, with a show of interest.

"No, not that Trinidad; would to heaven it were!" ejaculated Captain Lo, going to his locker and pouring out a glass of wine. "This is a miserable, little, barren island—all alone by itself here. The English, once upon a time, tried a penal settlement upon it, but it didn't answer. Yet they say it is a romantic-looking place. I have never been upon it myself, but ships frequently stop for water. It would be handy for us to fill up those empty barrels there."

Captain Lo looked around nervously as he said this, the cold sweat beading from his forehead.

Will Yarrel was turning over a leaf of his book, and did not answer.

"I say, Will, lad, I'll go ashore and fill up the casks if you would like the idea. We are really short, owing to the bursting of those hoops on the hogshead forward."

"I should like to see such an island, certainly. I don't think I ever expected to set foot on an uninhabited island. I must go on deck and take a look at it."

"Pooh! there's nothing to be seen yet. We are ten leagues away. Wait till this time to-morrow. I really think I will make a call, and see what the place is like." And he went back to the deck, and began to talk about filling the water casks.

The mate looked rather surprised, but answered carelessly:

"I have been ashore at Trinidad. It is pretty difficult making a landing except the water is very smooth. We can get some glorious turtle, and wild hogs are in the underbrush of the wooded parts. If you did not care for the delay, we might make quite an addition to the larder."

The captain saw that he was rather astonished, nevertheless.

"The voyage is spoilt now," he said, testily. "We sha'n't make our time, and it is as well to be hung for a good deal as a little."

And so the order was given to bear down to the island.

As they neared its shores Captain Lo's secret shame and discomfiture before his subordinates were suddenly dispersed. They saw a great smoke rising from the highest cliff, and their own flag reversed fluttering from a tree called for a countryman's help.

As soon as this discovery was made, there was great excitement on the Sea Foam's deck, and the shore was closely scrutinized by the aid of their most powerful glass.

"There is a group of men watching us," cried out the mate. "Some ship has been wrecked, and a boat of them have reached the island."

Captain Lo brightened up.

"Give them a signal to show that we understand. Now of course we must stop at the island."

They lay off the island that afternoon before nightfall, but did not deem it prudent to attempt to make a landing until morning.

A boat load of the steadiest hands were ready the moment the sun illuminated the scene, and the ship-

wrecked mariners hurried down to meet them with loud hurrahs.

“Ahoy there! Who are you and how came you here?” demanded Captain Lo, standing up in the boat and making a speaking-trumpet of his hands.

“Survivors of the Lively Jane. Six nights out in an open boat. Ask your help to a better berth than this old rock.”

“The Lively Jane? That’s likely!” ejaculated Captain Leyard. “Why, we left her in the London dock!” And he repeated the observation when the boat plunged ashore with the breaker, and he leaped out, half drenched with spray into the midst of the rather sorry-looking group.

“Mebbe, mebbe, Captain Lo; but the poor old craft lies at the bottom now. We sailed ten days after you, and had just the right winds, but we came into that terrible storm and were struck twice by lightning. The first bolt did us damage enough, but the last one set her on fire. Poor old thing! she’s sailed her last trip, and she did it handsomely, too!”

The skipper of the lost vessel drew his hand hastily across his eyes.

“Why, Jack Holt, it is really you, isn’t it?” exclaimed Captain Leyard, seizing the other by the hand. “And the Lively Jane has outsailed us in this shape?”

“But gone to the bottom in doing it, man, and there let her rest. We put off in hot haste when the lightning set her on fire; the mate in the other boat with half the crew. Heaven only knows what has become of them. We lost sight of them at sundown one night, and in the morning nothing was to be seen. I gave them full instructions to fall into this track, telling them of the island, and the likelihood of Indian and South American ships picking us up. But there’s not a sign of them, though it is possible some craft bound Brazilward has picked them up. Well, sir,

we're glad enough to see the Sea Foam. Will you take us along to the Cape and put us ashore?"

"Are we heathen?" returned Lo, indignantly. "But you must be famished, besides?"

"No. We found turtle enough, and managed to kill some birds. We could subsist here well enough, I suppose, in a savage fashion, but who could dwell in such a horrible solitude?"

Captain Lo sighed, and looked around to see what had become of Will Yarrel, who had come in his boat to the island. He had evidently wandered away to make his own exploration, for he was not among the sailors grouped about their shipwrecked comrades of the Lively Jane.

"We will take you on board as soon as you like," he said, somehow so drearily that his companion started, and looked inquiringly into his face.

But Captain Lo was not inclined to be communicative.

"I don't know but you will feel as if you were taking a Jonah on board the Sea Foam," said the latter, doubtfully, "and faith! I've had some such thought myself. Curse that passenger! to think all those poor fellows and the mate, as smart a seaman as ever trod a deck, may be gone to Davy's locker, and he is safe, sticking still in our way. I was a fool to let any money induce me to take him."

"A passenger?" said Captain Lo, inquiringly.

"Yes, and a queer kind of one, too. If you'll believe it, we knew nothing about it until the night before we sailed, and then a boat came alongside, and a queer cove, muffled up to the eyes, came aboard and offered me double pay to take a passenger out to Rio, and the fellow was only to come at the last minute. I might as well make a clean breast of it. I knew very well it looked like suspicious work, but I let the cursed money blind my eyes, and I've got my pay."

Captain Lo seized his hand, and shook it vigorously,

although his friend was hardly able to account for his sudden warmth of sympathy, crying out:

“You did, you did; there’s plenty more would have done the same, Holt, plenty more.”

“I don’t know. There’s one man never’ll be caught again by the trick. He’s a queer old fellow. The sailors swear he’s in league with the powers of darkness, and they wanted to pitch him out of the boat that first night. Do you know he was brought aboard dead drunk, or else drugged, and swears he never intended making such a voyage? I can’t make out whether he’s been tricked by some one, or is playing possum with me. But he is not a fair and open man, that’s plain enough, and there’s not one of us but will be thankful to see the last of him.”

“What have you got to do with him, Holt?” inquired Captain Lo, in a low, husky voice.

“Do? Why, I was to drop him at Rio. Now you may do as you please. Leave him on the island if you like. The thing is taken out of my hands.”

“It is very strange,” repeated Captain Lo.

“Decidedly strange, Leyard. Why, he’s an old man, over seventy. You’d have thought the night out in that open boat would have killed him, instead of which he’s livelier and perter than ever. You should see him rolling his eyes, and muttering. He’d make a capital Lear, only he’s too savage. If that cool fellow who came and engaged his passage has really injured him, I don’t envy him when this old chap gets at him, as he swears he will. He has made me describe his looks a dozen times, but I tell him the cloak and cap are all I can swear to.”

“A blue cloth coat, and a cap of the same,” muttered Captain Lo, mechanically, “long grizzly beard.”

“Exactly! Why, man, have you seen him?”

Captain Lo groaned in spirit, but not outwardly.

“Such a fellow came to me the night before I left London.”

“And you refused, and I was dolt enough to meddle with business you disdained to touch. I tell you this is a lesson, Leyard, to last me a life-time. Confound the man in the blue cloak! Blast his eyes!”

“Blue eyes—what an odd, pale color they were,” interposed Captain Lo, lugubriously; “and so large!”

“Blue? Oh, no, Leyard; they were gray and small.”

“You were dazed by the gold he brought, Holt; they were certainly blue, and no one could call them small.”

“Well, well, with the rest of the mischief, we won’t let him make us quarrel. But they were small and gray, nevertheless. Come and see the old fellow. But, if you don’t want to be bored to death you won’t let him know you’ve seen the man in the blue coat, let his eyes be what they will.”

Captain Lo looked over to the figure indicated by his companion’s pointing finger.

He saw a man, tall, and not much bent, but thin and spare, the skin dry and wrinkled, and swarthy as an Indian’s. He looked up just then, either because he held some clairvoyant knowledge of the scrutiny, or that he had been watching the pair, and Captain Lo met an eye small, coal-black, and brilliant, which held somehow a singular glare, like the fatal dazzle of a serpent.

“Bless my soul!” exclaimed Captain Lo, startled in spite of his absent-mindedness; “I don’t wonder your sailors were shy of him. Those are strange eyes to accompany that white hair. I can’t say I am particularly anxious to give him a passage.”

“Leave him then,” said the other; “it’s none of my business.”

“Leave him on the island!” said the captain of the Sea

Foam, slowly and thoughtfully. "Don't you think it would be murder to leave a feeble person here?"

Captain Holt laughed lightly.

"Not at all. I think a woman would manage to subsist here, much more a man of his long experience; and ships are so often calling, besides. It is a picturesque place for a Robinson Crusoe. Have you been to look at the cascades pouring like melted silver over the rocks?"

"I shall fill up the casks, now I have made a landing, and the boys must turn out a few turtles; and if we could shoot a wild hog, it would help out the provisions amazingly. I must go and see about it."

Accordingly, Captain Lo went out to the group of sailors who were watching this consultation of their superiors with close attention. He gave the mate a few directions, and then sauntered away to look for his youthful passenger.

He called for him twice before there was any response, and then the branching foliage of a thicket near at hand was parted cautiously, and a pale, frightened face looked out.

"Oh, Captain Leyard! I am a poor, persecuted creature! Dangers lurk for me even on this far-off, deserted island," he said, with quivering lips.

"He has found it out," thought Captain Lo, his heart dropping like a lump of lead, and he hung his own head, and was silent.

"Oh, sir, for the love of Heaven, help me! Be my friend!"

"My poor lad! Would to Heaven I might! Curse the day when——"

He paused, shame-stricken. Did Will Yarrel know the whole—how Lodovico Leyard had sold his honorable character for a bag of gold? If not, his own tongue should not be blistered by the confession of the humiliating truth.

But Will Yarrel by this time had partly overcome his agitation.

"Sir," said he, "I have one enemy worse than all the rest of my troubles, and they are not few. I do not know whether it was friend or foe who gave me into your charge, but I have blessed one result of his deed, that I was escaping from this cruel and inexorable enemy. I do not know what it means. He was certainly in London the day I was brought to you; but, behold! almost the first face I saw, when I stepped from the boat, was his! Oh, sir, is he one of the wrecked crew, that old man with the white hair, and those terrible eyes that will pierce through all things?"

"He is a passenger, my boy. Something such a passenger as you have been, I suspect."

"Oh, sir, must you take him on board the Sea Foam? Is it wicked, cruel, heartless in me to beg you to leave him out? Oh, sir, if you could help taking him!"

And the frightened brown eyes looked imploringly into his.

"But how could I?" answered Captain Lo. "What decent excuse could I offer for so inhuman a proceeding? How could I take the rest, and singling him out, say he must remain behind?"

Will Yarrel wrung his hands.

"Alack! I know not, and yet I know I would rather be left on a desert island myself than taken into his company. And it cannot be done?"

"Indeed, I do not see how, although he might make himself very comfortable here until another ship came to take him off. But of all these shipwrecked wretches he is most anxious to get back to England."

"Then leave *me* then. I will remain upon the island myself," exclaimed Will Yarrel, in a voice of passionate determination.

"Are you really in earnest?" asked Captain Lo, scarcely

able to credit his ears, and yet his heart leaping up jubilantly at this amicable settlement of his own trouble.

“I do. You say there is no danger. I shall be here secure and tranquil. What need I to fear? Oh, it is only mankind that I need to stand in dread. Nature will whisper sweet and tender messages. Heaven is above me; and when the next ship touches at the island it will take me away, and he need never know my fate. He will have lost the track. Let me stay, sir.”

“It is a very singular request, but it is your wish. I have nothing to say. I will send on shore your trunk and an abundance of provisions. I will leave you signals to call the attention of passing ships. I will leave you everything to make you comfortable.”

Will Yarrel, after a hasty glance around to be sure no one was in sight, seized his hand and covered it with kisses, in the midst of which came a hot splash of tears.”

“Oh, sir, the blessing of a poor, persecuted creature shall follow you. Heaven reward you, and——”

“Hush,” cried Captain Lo, huskily, “or you will drive me mad. My conscience has already punished me enough. Do not thank me, but bless Heaven, as I do, that it has turned what seemed a cruel imposition into a deed of mercy. Boy, boy; I was wicked enough to accept a bag of gold in payment for your passage, and you to be left on this island.”

The agony of remorse on his face explained more lucidly than his words all Captain Lo meant to confess.

For a moment the wide brown eyes stared at him, and then, taking in all the revelation, they deepened and deepened into blackness. The two hands were flung in childish fashion over the agitated face.

“Oh, oh,” cried Will Yarrel; “what have I done—what have I done that everybody should be so willing to turn against me?”

That was the keenest thrust Captain Lo had yet received. For a moment he staggered under it, and then in a grave, mournful voice he told the whole story.

"You are not to blame," exclaimed his listener. "I freely exonerate you from blame. Only help me in this matter, and I will not only forgive, but bless you."

"It shall be done, and I myself will see that you are rescued from the island. At Cape of Good Hope I will find out the vessels bound to this track, and some of them shall call for you.

"I will hide in this thicket then until you get them all to the ship. Oh, be careful not to breathe a hint to that man. If this island were filled with wild beasts I would choose to remain rather than return upon the same ship with him."

He broke off suddenly, and crouched down behind the leafy screen.

The mate and Captain Holt were coming around the rocks.

Captain Lo hurried away to meet them, and, with unusual alacrity, proposed to get the Lively Jane's company at once on board the Sea Foam.

Which was presently accomplished. While they were being welcomed in the cabin and mess-room, a trunk and heavy box were lowered into the boat, and covered over with water casks.

Captain Lo left the mate to look after affairs on board, much to his friend Holt's surprise, and went himself to oversee the filling of the water casks.

He came back with a brighter face than his crew had seen on the voyage.

The sails were set, and a gentle but steady breeze filled them out. The Sea Foam stood off from the bold shore, glided out like a fairy creature, lingering a long time, a

white speck in the dazzling blue of blending sea and sky, but finally dwindled, dwindled, and vanished.

Will Yarrel, on the lonely island shore, watched it disappear. When it was fairly gone, the large, mournful brown eyes were lifted upward yearningly, the hands across the heaving breast clasped themselves prayerfully, and he murmured, softly:

“At last, at last I am free from the persecution of men! I am alone with earth and Heaven! Why should I tremble, or be afraid? Nature is loving and beneficent! I can trust myself here, and fear no menacing mysteries.”

CHAPTER XI.

MAURICE AROUSED.

Mr. John Middleton, gloomy and morose, sat in the little lodging room, staring down blankly into the street, when a light step and a mellow whistle announced to him the approach of his son Maurice.

“What a noisy creature you are!” said he, querulously, as the door unclosed.

“Am I? Well, you will soon be freed from any trouble on my account. I have just made my arrangements to be off.”

“Off! Where, I should like to know? in a tone of keener interest.

“Oh, off to seek my fortune! Here, there, wherever it beckons!”

“We ought to have made a fortune without seeking for it,” said Mr. Middleton, Sr., in an injured tone of voice. “It was a terrible, terrible blunder, somehow.”

“But not a blunder of mine. You will give me credit for that, sir. To tell you the truth, it is partly on this

business that I am going. The innuendo of the Wainwright lawyer stung me to the quick. It was the first time my blood fired in this affair. Why, sir, he as good as insinuated that you put that vagabond, Mathew Merle, out of the way, because he had the power to say something to hurt your cause. Now you know why I have hated the affair from the commencement. But I can't stand that. When the honor of the name one bears is aspersed, then it is time for a man to bestir himself. And I am just going to set this thing right. Mathew Merle shall be hunted up, and unless there is actually wrong on your side, this claim has got to come up again, not to obtain the Wainwright property, but to right the Middleton name."

"Mathew Merle hunted up," said Middleton, senior, in a bewildered voice. "Felix won't consent to that."

"Felix won't consent! What do you mean, sir?" demanded his astonished son.

Perhaps Mr. John Middleton became aware that he had already said too much, for he tried to turn the subject.

"Well, well, I am glad to see you waking up about anything. What do you intend to do?"

"Follow up a little clew I have found. The man is over seventy years old, and it will never do to waste time. I know where he stopped, and I found out a rather queer thing about him. Your vilest old creature has a conscience after all. A lodging-house keeper, in one of these wretched streets near the wharves, tells me this Mathew Merle had a niece who lodged with her—a sweet, innocent creature, to whom he was a cruel tyrant. She tells how the child trembled at the very sound of his voice, and how she was carefully guarded, oftentimes locked for hours in her room, with the key in his pocket, and he away. But that she managed to escape one night, and disappeared—no one knew where. And how the old man stormed and raved, and went off to search for her. And she has not set

her eyes upon his face again. But the girl was found drowned, and her clothing is now in the care of the police, waiting his call, if he ever comes. Don't you see that the whole is explained now? Mathew Merle, filled with remorse, has gone searching for the girl. I have taken her name, and I mean to reach him through that. I shall insert a cautious advertisement in the leading papers of our principal cities. Something, you know, like this: 'If any relative of hers wishes to hear of the whereabouts of one Maria Merle, let him address or call upon so and so.' Don't you think it ought to work?"

"I should think so. I wish, Maurice, you had taken hold of the case before."

"Ah, so at last you have a faint suspicion that your immaculate paragon might have managed more shrewdly. At last you have an inkling that the worthless dreamer has some capability."

"I always said you were capable, Maurice, if only you would rouse up and take hold of anything. I've told Felix so a dozen times. But you must own you have quixotic notions that hinder sometimes."

Maurice looked over to the puzzled, deprecating expression of his father's face, and the young fellow laughed heartily before he replied:

"Thank you for the compliment. I understand just what men of your stamp mean by 'quixotic.' You mean if there's a roundabout, shuffling, manageable case, I'm not of that sort to undertake it. You are right. It's more suited to Felix."

"I wish you and Felix were better friends, Maurice. You're as hard on him, in your way, Maurice, as you used to complain he was on you. He's not happy at all now. Something or other troubles him."

"Remorse for his gross mismanagement, I presume," answered Maurice, dryly. "When Felix treats me as if I

were anything but a silly boy, it will be time enough for me to offer my sympathy."

"He is coming here to-day. I think he has left his situation."

"What was his situation, father? He was there at the trial with a lady, for I saw him help her into a carriage, and afterward I was told the lady was Miss Wainwright, but it seems too preposterous to believe."

Mr. Middleton, senior, in due remembrance of the "quixotic" notions, kept discreet silence.

Presently he turned again to the pile of fresh newspapers, and Maurice sat down to his writing.

An hour or two afterward, the elder son, coming into the room, found them thus.

Felix looked worn and haggard. There were dark circles under his eyes; his lips were pale and twitched nervously. He had the appearance of a man just out from a serious illness; and even Maurice was touched with compassion, though he had tact enough to avoid betraying it.

"Good-day to you, Felix," he said, cheerily. "How goes the world with you?"

"None the better for discussing its movements," said Felix, rather shortly, and he turned to his father.

"I'm going away from this, sir; I'm going to South America."

"To South America?" ejaculated Middleton, senior, in utter amazement. "What for, Felix?"

"To hunt up Mathew Merle," was the hollow-toned response.

"Well, that is odd. Here has Maurice been telling me the same thing!"

Felix whirled around to his half-brother.

"You—you!" said he. "What have you to do with it?"

"I have something to do with clearing up the name I bear from such dishonorable aspersions. Mathew Merle

must be found to prove to this same court that a Middleton had no hand in putting him out of the way."

"Pshaw!" muttered Felix, impatiently, turning away from the clear-eyed face, which was handsomer than ever under its indignation; but in a moment after he added, gloomily. "But it is true; Mathew Merle must be found. I will find him."

"What makes you think of South America. It is the last quarter in which I should turn. My own mind is that he will be found in some of the large cities of the United Kingdom. My clew suggests such an idea," returned Maurice, eagerly.

"Your clew?—what clew?"

Maurice was in the mood now to ignore his imperious ways, and he related the same story he had given his father.

"I never heard about the niece," said Felix, "but I have heard him talk about a Don he expected to arrive shortly from eastward somewhere. Look if you like around home, but I shall take the first passage I can find to Rio, and hunt up the British brig Lively Jane."

"The Lively Jane!" echoed Middleton, senior, turning around and pushing up the glasses which were helping him to read the paper. "Why, here's something about her, here in the paper:

"The steamer Nautilus spoke a ship on her passage home, and that ship reported the British brig Lively Jane, Captain Holt, burned at sea. She had on board the mate and the long boat's crew, who had escaped through innumerable perils. The captain, with the other boat and a passenger, name unknown to the mate, are supposed to have perished.'"

Middleton, senior, read it off glibly, unmindful of the effect of the intelligence. His son Felix had been pale and ill-looking before. Now, however, he was fairly ghastly,

He clutched with one hand at the chair, and stretched out the other for the paper.

"By heavens! that is news indeed. The passenger was Mathew Merle himself."

"How do you know?" demanded Maurice, sharing the excitement which set his father shaking like a leaf.

"I know; that is enough. Good heavens! what fatality!" said Felix, his small gray eyes gleaming like steel. "Now I must go beyond South America; I must go to Australia itself. I will dig up a witness," he exclaimed, with fierce passion, "if I am obliged to go to the church-yard for one! I will bring back the proof of that marriage!"

"And I will look up the survivors of that ship," said Maurice, less vehemently, but quite as resolutely. "I will go to the lawyers with the proof that the man took passage for himself. The family honor shall not be lightly assailed."

"You had better leave the ship affair to me," said Felix, rather sharply, "and the whole affair indeed. There is no danger of my neglecting it. The success of the mission involves more than honor, or life itself. If I do not find what I ask to establish our suit, I would rather die than not."

When he spoke he poured out a glass of water, and drank it with feverish eagerness.

"Look out for your health, Felix, if that is a specimen of your inward thirst," said Maurice, gravely. "This affair is wearing upon you."

"Wearing upon me!" repeated Felix, bitterly. "I should think so. I am and shall be consumed by an inward fire until it is settled."

"It is not for the money, I am sure," observed Maurice, looking at him curiously.

Felix turned away his face impatiently, but not before his brother saw the sullen flush creeping into his face.

HE PUSHED A STROKE WITH THE OAR, AND SEIZED HER.—(P. 13.)



"One woman's influence has such power," murmured Maurice, meditatively. "It is fortunate for me that I am unscathed as yet by the invincible arrow."

"You will never know the depths into which high, strong spirits can sink, or the heights to which they rise," said Felix, coldly.

"I will never bribe the woman I love," thought Maurice, but he did not speak the thought.

Felix took the paper which held the account of the Lively Jane's disaster, and put it in his pocket. Then he put on his hat.

"I must go down and see about it, and learn how soon the ship is expected in port. I must wait for that."

"Is it to be accepted as an incontrovertible fact that the captain's boat with the passenger is lost?" queried Maurice. "Why may not equal good fortune have sent another ship in their track?"

"They ought to know if such a thing was likely. I must talk with the survivors before I make my decision. It does not seem possible that Mathew Merle is dead."

Felix shuddered as he said it; he best knew why.

And then he went away, and hurrying along the street was nearly run over at a crossing by a gay pair of horses attached to a handsome carriage.

He would not have looked up then more than was necessary to get out of the way, had not a clear, mellow voice said, hastily:

"Oh, Robert, take care. You will injure Mr. Thorne."

At these words and that voice Felix flung back his head and looked into the carriage.

Octavia Wainwright sat there among the velvet cushions like another Cleopatra, as imperial in her magnificent beauty.

The man's lips were whitened, but he held his features in firm control.

She bowed graciously, and beckoned him to approach while the coachman reined up the horses.

But he waved his hand in a dissenting gesture, and only obeyed at the second call.

"Felix," said Miss Wainwright, "my father misses you very much."

"Ah!"

"He is very angry at your sudden departure."

"General Wainwright's displeasure is to be regretted, but in this case it is unavoidable."

"I suppose I could silence him if I told him your true name and history——"

She said this questioningly, the luminous, magnetic eyes on his face, which held desperately to its mask of ice.

"I should advise you by all means to tell him."

"But he has been so fond of you, and if you returned, it would so mar the old harmony of your relation to him. I cannot bear to do it."

"I shall not return. I expect to leave shortly for a foreign country."

"Poor papa! He will so grieve to hear it. He thinks no one can fill your place, and he clings to the hope that you will make your appearance. I know you will be glad to hear how much he valued your services."

"You know also that General Wainwright's friendship or approval had nothing whatever to do with my motives in remaining at or in leaving Wainwright Slope," broke in Felix, sternly. "Good-day, Miss Wainwright."

He strode on, never turning his head.

Miss Wainwright looked after him gravely.

"The poor fellow is fairly fretting himself into a fever. How much he has changed! What a strange thing this love is!" soliloquized the beautiful woman, as the carriage moved on.

But presently the sober look vanished. She recalled Lord

Roland Falkner's gallant speech when he came down to inquire for the general's health, and Octavia smiled proudly, and Felix and his wan face and heavy eyes were for the time forgotten.

CHAPTER XII.

"A FAITHFUL SERVANT!"

Lord Ronald Falkner's party did not proceed immediately upon their Scotland tour. Lady Mary was indisposed the day after Miss Wainwright called upon her, and, contrary to the expectations of her physician, she did not seem to improve any as the days slipped on. The source of the disease also baffled him. There seemed no special ailment, but a general lassitude and debility. Perhaps his perplexity made his face look graver than he intended, but Lord Ronald, who was a devoted son, took alarm, and posted off a messenger to his uncle, her ladyship's only brother, the Earl of Chichester, and to her sister, Lady Frances Morton.

The noble earl arrived first, and, without any hint of the object of his visit, walked in upon the invalid quietly, and his cool, calm tones aroused her from a melancholy reverie.

"Well, Mary, my dear, this is very shabby behavior of you. How does it happen you are ill just when you should be well? That tour promised a world of enjoyment, and you are keeping the whole party waiting for you."

Lady Mary was sitting at the window, pillowed luxuriously in the easy-chair. The white cashmere wrapper, and the lace ruche at the fair throat and slender wrists, heightened the extreme delicacy of her complexion, and while she had never looked more lovely, she had likewise never seemed more frail and feeble.

The careless look dropped from the earl's face, and

deeply touched by an unusual emotion, he bent down and kissed her tenderly.

“Why, Mary, pet, you do look more like a creature made out of moonbeams and fairy dew, than a mortal woman. What have you been doing to yourself?”

Lady Mary had started nervously at the first sound of his voice, and the thin, fair hands lying listlessly in her lap were clenched upon the arm of her chair, as she turned her face toward him, although she answered in her own gentle voice:

“Why, Philip, how you startled me! When did you arrive? I had no warning of your coming.”

“Oh, it is a sudden affair. Ronald sent me word you were not very well, and I came to look after you myself. Have you been overtasking your strength in any way?”

“No; I have done nothing. Ronald is foolishly anxious. It is nothing settled or serious. I am only tired.”

“Tired? Of what?”

She tried to smile carelessly, but a sigh fluttered through.

“I don't know, indeed. Pray sit down. How did you leave Lady Chichester and Frances?”

“The family are all well. You know we were coming to meet your Scottish party. Has Sir James seen you to-day?”

“Not to-day; he was here last night. But it is entirely unnecessary; he will not help me any.”

And again there was a little sigh.

The earl had scarcely taken his eyes from her face. He did not fail to notice its thinness, and the hollow circles around the eyes, and the nervous tremor of the lips.

She was his favorite sister. Nor had he yet forgotten how close had been their fraternal affection, nor what an idol and hero she had made of him in his collegiate days! Perhaps he remembered, also, sundry signal examples of her sisterly devotion which had not come to the

knowledge of other people. At all events, he who was usually a cold, haughty, rather selfish man, was now deeply moved. He went on catechising like a physician:

“Do you have any appetite, Mary?”

“A little. Pray don't trouble yourself. Sir James has asked all those questions, and made nothing out of it.”

“And how do you sleep?” persisted he.

A scarcely perceptible shudder ran through her frame; the truthful eyes dropped.

“I see!” exclaimed he, almost angrily. “You do not sleep at all.”

“Oh, yes; I slept last night. I spoke to Sir James, and he gave me some opiates.”

“I wonder what is the matter?” said the earl, musingly. “It is most often mental trouble which brings such symptoms; but there is nothing to trouble you. Your Ronald is a pattern son. I wish to Heaven my heir was likely to be one-half so steady and trustful. I would, indeed, I could look back myself on as innocent a youth as his. I am rather vexed with you, Mary. It seems to me, if you chose you might help this, and be well.”

Something in what he had said touched her, for she caught her breath sharply, and bit her lips to keep them from quivering, and beneath the downcast lids the slow tears were gathering.

The earl drew his chair to her side, and took one of the fair hands into his, spreading it out on his palm, half playfully, half caressingly. His voice, however, was grave and earnest:

“Now, Mary, if there is anything on your mind, let me know what it is. I dare say it is some morbid fancy, whose sickly shadow can be immediately scattered by a wholesome ray of light. I've puzzled myself to find a cause, but I cannot. It isn't anything Ronald has done? He hasn't been nonsensical and fallen in love below his rank, has he?”

"No; oh, no," faltered Lady Mary. "My boy has never given me a single pang of anxiety." And then she added, suddenly, brushing off the tears from the long lashes, and looking directly back to his watchful eyes: "Philip, did you know Arthur Morley was dead?"

"Morley?" asked he, in a careless tone. "I've forgotten such a person. Who is it?"

"Forgotten? Oh, Philip!"

Indignation, as well as reproach, deepened her tone.

A flush of red came surging into his face.

"Bless my heart! That person? I had quite forgotten about him. And he is dead?"

And then there was a long silence between the brother and sister, and it was the earl's turn to be fidgety and embarrassed.

Lady Mary's pale face reflected a little of the glow on his, and she twisted her fingers in and out the lace ruche, destroying its pretty curves, waiting for him to speak.

He was aware of her expectation, and presently faltered:

"Well, poor fellow! he was a faithful servant. You haven't heard from him lately, have you?"

"A *servant*! Philip, Philip, how dare you, now he is dead, deny him his due? He has gone whither his heroic soul cannot hold its corroding secret—your secret and mine, Philip. Think how he has borne it, what he must have suffered—the noble exile! the devoted martyr! the risen saint! And you call him a faithful *servant*!"

The soft eyes were almost fiery now, a hectic spot burned hotly on her cheek; she rose to her feet, and faced him in her fierce indignation.

"Well, well! what is the use of raking up these old troubles? The man is dead and gone. There is no help for it."

"No, there is no help for it now! Philip, Philip, there is no help for his trials now; but what can you say for all

these years that have come and gone over you and me, here in England, prosperous, and gay, and honored, and he there in Australia, alone and dreary, a man innocently banished from his country? Can you think of it, and not shudder, and cower, and tremble, as I do?"

The noble earl looked intensely annoyed.

"It is just as I have said!" he exclaimed, impatiently. "You have got your mind upon this morbid notion, and that is all which ails you. Be reasonable, Mary, and look at the thing naturally. Nothing has altered from the condition of things as they have been all these years, when you have been calm and happy. No change, except that the man is dead, and the grave covered safely over the secret. Your mind should be easier and lighter."

"What! rejoice that our wrong-doing is hidden forever, and forget that he has gone to his grave bearing another's burden of guilt!—no justification in his life!"

How her eyes dilated with their anguish and indignation!

"My dear Mary, that old story is entirely forgotten. Who is there to rake up its smothered embers? This Morley, you know, was never actually sentenced—not proved guilty. He lived an honored and useful life there in Sydney. If any knew or heard the ugly rumor, they charitably pardoned it as the wildness of his early youth. I remember that Sir Hugh told me that there was not a man in Sydney, not even the governor, who was more honored and respected than this Arthur Morley. He became a famous doctor, you know. Why, perhaps this very injustice was the making of his character. He was impetuous and passionate once, but this steadied him. Besides, Mary, you must remember he was only one of the common class after all. What little he may have suffered, and we are not sure that he really did feel the deprivation, was but a trifle to the great trouble which must have come elsewhere. He was a generous fellow. It was wrong in me to call him a

servant, for he proved himself a generous friend to me. Sometimes, indeed, I have wondered at the depth of that friendship, and what I could have done to have won such attachment."

At these words Lady Mary smiled bitterly.

"Philip," said she, "it was always strange to me that you were so blind. If all this rested on your conscience alone, do you think it would rasp and wear my spirit so? Arthur Morley took upon himself the woeful sacrifice, not from friendship to the heir of my father's earldom, but from love to his daughter. Do you think if I had not allowed him to deceive himself with wild lover hopes, he would have consented to that blackening accusation?"

Her head dropped again, her face grew deathly pale, and she sank back into the chair gasping for breath.

He did not call the servant from the adjoining room, but found the water, and brought it to her himself, and while she drank, he stroked gently the soft, silken hair.

"My poor Mary, and you persist in tormenting yourself with these useless accusations! What use? Think of it, my dear sister, it does not, it cannot help matters now. That was a wretched affair. Heaven knows we all suffered enough over it, but we quieted it in the best possible manner. Look at it calmly; imagine the great shock to our father, the inconceivable distress to the whole family, the ruin for me, and the wide stir and calumny of the public which might have been, but was not, because one person stepped between. And after all was there any punishment for him? He did not suffer want. You know the moment I came in possession I put a generous sum in the bank at his disposal."

"But he never touched it," she cried, with a thrill of pride in the tone.

"Because he had no need. His career there in Australia was singularly smooth, and free from trials. It is a great

consolation for me to remember it. He must have been happy."

The face of the listener was writhing as with a spasm.

Happy—Arthur Morley happy—an exile from the country he loved with all an Englishman's loyal fervor!

She sprang from her chair stung almost to frenzy by her thoughts.

"Philip," cried she, hoarsely, "do not cheat yourself, nor try to cajole me into believing his life was a happy one. If ever there was a man abused, cajoled, his best and dearest hopes trampled upon—a man whose life must have been one slow torture, that man was Arthur Morley. And he is dead—he is dead, and I can never offer him any atonement, never fling myself in my place—groveling at his feet."

It was a wail, rather than a broken sentence. The earl stood looking at her, sorely troubled and deeply alarmed for her.

"Mary, Mary, why should you take it so much at heart?" he said, speaking as calmly and soothingly as possible. "If he was willing to stand in this place, bearing it cheerfully, why should you so needlessly lament and agonize over it? At least, he is free from everything now."

She clasped her hands, and a joyful smile broke over her wan face.

"Yes, he is free from all now. The martyr! The saint! He has gone to his reward."

"Grieve no more then. Listen to my advice, my own dear sister. Why should you grieve so deeply, when it is my place to bear the remorse. I who was the guilty one. You were innocent, Mary; leave the burden of remorse to me."

"Innocent!"

She repeated the word with bitter emphasis, and wrung her hands wildly.

He was thoroughly frightened now, and said, hastily and commandingly:

"You must talk no more now. I will not hear another word. I tell you, you have grown morbid on these unwholesome thoughts. You must have more company. I shall look after you myself. Where is this Miss Wainwright Lady Frances was telling me of? I was rather surprised at her assurance of your eagerness to accept the lady for your daughter. But it is a good family, and the property not to be disdained. Do I understand that Ronald has actually proposed?"

She did not see his artful leading of her thoughts into another channel, and answered, languidly:

"It is not a settled thing, by any means. Ronald is very much in love, and I am already warmly attached to her, but there has been no formal declaration of any sort."

"I must look into it a little. I heard something the other day about a suit against General Wainwright, some preposterous, outrageous claim or other, on the estate."

Lady Mary turned her head quickly, with an expression of keen interest on her face.

"A claim on the estate! You must look into it, Philip; for my boy's sake, you must look into it."

Immensely relieved by this sign of returning interest, the earl answered, eagerly:

"To be sure I will. So you are really a little worldly on Ronald's account?"

"I am, I am—oh, I am weak, and sinful, and worldly everyway. And in this thing I am desperately set. Ronald must marry a girl good and refined, but wealthy. I would refuse my consent to his marriage with the most peerless creature in the kingdom, if she lacked a fortune."

"Well, it seems he has chosen according to your desires. But I will make inquiries. And now, Mary, where are your opiates? You must take another, and shall I ring for the

waiting-maid? You may prepare for a new physician. I am going to take your case in my own hands, and shall take you down with me to Chichester Rookery as soon as you can bear the journey. Don't frown. I'll have General Wainwright and the fair heiress down there. You need cheerful society. Good-by, dear, I'm going to look up Ronald."

The moment the earl took leave, Lady Mary rose to her feet and looked around her drearily.

"Oh, why was I afraid to tell him the whole? He says I am innocent! *Innocent!* Oh, that I could change places with *him!* Oh, that I could change this satin-hung couch for the dreary Australian grave!"

And as the maid entered, she took the opiate, flung herself upon the couch, and with her arms thrown up around her head in the fashion of a grieved child, turned her face to the pillow, and closed her eyes.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THEN YOU KNEW OF DOCTOR MORLEY?"

Jane West looked over to the pursuing boat, and then cast a swift, yearning glance toward the gracefully outlined ship, and pulled with desperate strength upon the oars, her own little craft whirled along upon a swift, though somewhat uneven course. The light scuds which had been drifting loosely across the sky gathered together in a solid mass, threatening to obscure the starlight, and the wind rose, gathering strength as the clouds darkened and tossed the waves into miniature mountains. As she perceived how the swelling water and the gathering darkness hid from her, every other moment, the little eggshell which brought Mr. Aaron Morley and the policeman in pursuit, she smiled triumphantly.

"I shall escape. In a little while they will not be able to see me at all," muttered she; and, cheered by the thought, she allowed herself to rest a moment on the oars.

Mr. Aaron Morley at that moment became satisfied of the same thing, and stung by chagrin and anger, he did a cowardly and shameful act. He pulled out a large horse-pistol, which he had thrust into his pocket at the first sound of a footstep in Doctor Morley's office, waited until their boat rose upon the crest of the waves and revealed the black line beyond, marking the spot where Jane West managed her little craft so gallantly, and then resting the ugly weapon on the edge of the boat, he took deliberate aim, and fired.

"There is no harm in winging the bird, if there is no other way to stop its flight," he said, with a sardonic sneer.

Even the policeman was indignant.

"It's a woman, all alone, sir," remarked he, "and the worst thing you have accused her of is theft."

A little stinging cramp across her shoulder came simultaneously with the report of the fire-arm to Jane West, so she knew what it meant.

"That cowardly villain!" said she, and seized the oar with renewed vigor. "Now I pray that the squall may come."

She never touched her shoulder to ascertain the depth of the wound, but she turned the skiff in another direction, while she murmured:

"I must not go to the ship now. They understand that I was trying for it."

In a moment more the squall came. The angry clouds above rushed together like a line of black warriors flinging themselves into battle. The wind swooped down, like the rush of a mighty bird of prey lashing the water with its fierce wings. The great ship, safely anchored beyond, only

swung to and fro, and rocked and creaked; but the little eggshell boat was like a feather in a whirlpool.

Jane let go the oar, while the spray flew over her in rather uncomfortable shower-baths, and clung to the seat, expecting every moment to be tossed out upon the chilling wave. The fog and the darkness shut down around her, wiping out everything, and leaving only a staring black space, which her straining eyes in vain essayed to pierce. A sudden shock, the lurch and quivering of her frail craft, and the event she dreaded came. She was tossed out as a cork might be flung upon the river. She screamed for help involuntarily, though she believed she had drifted against Aaron Morley's boat. A stout, hearty voice responded close at hand:

"Ahoy there! Who's in trouble? Blast this nasty fog. I'm here bending over the stern of my boat. Where are you? Sing out again if there's help wanted."

Jane struggled toward the voice, buoyed up by her clothing, and regaining her presence of mind.

"I am a helpless woman, trying to escape from a cowardly man," said she. "Help me, I pray you."

And in a moment after she was able to discern the outline of a boat, and a dark figure stooping down to the water.

"Here! here!" cried she, gasping and panting.

He pushed a stroke with the oar, and seized her. It was the wounded shoulder, but Jane did not utter a cry. She sat down in the bottom of his boat as soon as he had dragged her in, and tried to stop shivering.

The man, whoever he was, for the darkness would not allow her to see his face to tell if it was familiar, began whistling.

"This is a queer go," said he, presently. "Where do you want me to take you? for I suppose you expect me to carry you where you were going, since I've run into you, and lost you your boat."

"I hope you will be kind enough to help me," answered Jane. "And above all, I beg of you to save me from that boat which has been following after me."

"My eyes! and was that why they fired? I heard the shot, and like a fool put out of my course to see what it meant. What were they firing at you for?"

"Because I was trying to get away from them."

"But what did they want of you?"

It was curious how the voices of these two talking in the dark showed to each just the other's expression of countenance.

Jane knew that the man's eyes were peering down upon her, glinting with their eager curiosity, his mouth open, his ears even agape. And he was as well aware that a stern gravity darkened her eyes and set her lips together grimly.

"I do not know as I could make you understand if I tried, and I am not sure that I ought to try. Are you a sailor belonging to the ship beyond, or a Sydney boatman?"

"I have lived in Sydney these dozen years, ma'am."

Her voice showed how her face brightened.

"Then you knew of Doctor Morley?"

"In course I did, ma'am. The Lord bless him, as no doubt he has done before now. There's not his likes to be seen again in Sydney."

"Now may Heaven be praised!" ejaculated Jane, the first hysterical sob catching at the steadiness of her voice.

"Now I know you will help me. What good thing has he done for you?"

"Faith, ma'am, and it's not one, nor two, but nearer a dozen. But the best of all was setting my Jimmy's broken jaw, so there's never a sign of the fracture to mar his good looks. How closely that good man watched a poor boy, knowing as how he was never to get a fee for it!"

“What! You are Jimmy Owen’s father? Listen, sir, you are going to pay Doctor Morley’s fee now. There was something he wanted done very much—a package to be carried to England by my own hands, and this man, his brother, who is the heir, says it shall not go. I am running away with it. I am Jane West, the woman who kept his house and helped in his office. You know, by yourself, that one must be willing to face any danger rather than fail to fulfill a request of Doctor Morley’s. They are coming hunting for me. Oh, if there was only a ship below, all ready to sail for England!”

“Bless your good heart!” exclaimed the man, in a perfect fervor of delight, “there’s the Royal Bess down below, ready to slip off the very minute the wind changes. I’ve just come up from taking down a bundle they forgot, to the captain’s wife. I’ll take you down straight off. They sha’n’t get you. So you’re Miss Jane. Well, well! Jimmy has told me enough about your nursing and fussing over him. I’ll take you anywhere you say, miss, and I’d just like a chance to pay off the man as fired that lubberly shot at you. How did he know it would miss?”

Jane did not say that it was hardly a miss, but she asked, anxiously:

“Do you think they would take me on board the vessel? Would they let me go to England with them just as I am? I have clothing in this bag tied on my back, and my money, I suppose, can be dried and made as good as new. I must not go back to Sydney, for he has the law on his side, and can compel me to give up the packet.”

“Take you! I should think Captain Warner would be a pretty sailor if he wouldn’t help a woman in trouble.”

“Hush!” cried Jane, “the boat is coming this way. Don’t you hear their voices? How they are shouting!”

Her new protector groped about for his other oar.

“We’ll see about their catching you. It’s best to make

a lively movement, though; for in ten minutes it will be brightened up here."

"What a noise they make!" said Jane, uneasily.

"Mebbe they've found your empty boat. Ten to one they'll believe you drowned. You're cold from the water, ain't you? Mebbe you wouldn't object to a drop of spirit, just to keep off a chill."

"I shall be well enough," said Jane, "if only they will take me aboard that ship."

"Never you fear for that, ma'am. I'll risk all I've got on Captain Warner's good heart."

Nothing more was said, and the kind boatman saved his breath to be used with his lusty exertions at the oar.

He was right about the squall. The clouds were scudding away, and the wind dropped down to a light air. One by one, in little patches of cleared sky, the stars looked out again.

Jane looked back anxiously for every sign of Aaron Morley's boat, but they were on the other side of the ship now, and the boatman was aiming still farther out toward the sea.

He only paused twice to wipe away the streaming perspiration from his face, and once to rest his arms.

"You are very kind," said Jane, softly, and though he did not guess it, the tears began to drop silently down her cheeks.

"The most I can do will be little enough for all that has been done for Jimmy and me."

"Ah, yes. It is the payment of Doctor Morley's debt. It is all we can, any of us, do for him now."

"There, ma'am, look off to the right. Don't you see her poles raking against the sky? That's the Royal Bess, and it's my opinion she won't have to wait long for the right sort of a breeze."

Less than an hour afterward Jane West stood on the deck

of the British ship. Her grave, earnest face, the clear, truthful eyes, confirmed the good account James Owen had given so enthusiastically. The captain's wife took her kindly and tenderly by the hand and led her down into the cabin to obtain dry clothing and warming drinks.

The captain, meanwhile, had been giving James Owen instructions about drawing her money from the bank, by means of the book she had so thoughtfully provided, and transmitting it through the proper channels to a London banker.

Just before daylight came the welcome breeze, and the sails were shaken out merrily, and the *Royal Bess* glided out of the cove into the noble harbor and sped away on her ocean pathway. She passed into Table Bay one clear afternoon, and ran alongside a ship flying the English Jack.

Her eager group on deck, watching for the picturesque shores of Cape Town, saw plainly the people on the other vessel, and Captain Warner sung out presently, in a hearty voice:

"Ahoy, there, Lo Leyard! What are you doing out here at the outer anchorage?"

"Is that you, Warner? Where from?" shouted back Captain Lo, for it was the *Sea Foam* lying there at anchor.

"From Sydney, bound to Liverpool. Where do you hail from, and how goes the world?"

"I've had a confounded slow passage from home, and am bound to India. Stopped here to land a crew of shipwrecked sailors. I'll take a boat and come to you when you anchor. I want a word with you, Warner."

And so it happened that when the *Royal Bess* sailed away in one direction, and the *Sea Foam* was towed in the other, the two ship-masters waved each other a farewell which had an accompanying glance of significance.

"Now my mind is very easy," muttered Captain Lo.

“Warner is a man to do as he says. He will look after the poor lad, and I may stop worrying.”

Captain Warner drew his mate's attention by his long study of the charts.

“I'm thinking, Mr. Mack,” said he, presently, “that I shall try a new course. It can't make much difference at this season, to run out a little farther west—something near the outward track.”

His wife and Jane West, standing near, smiled at each other.

“That's to give us a peep at that island he's been describing,” said the former, “though I don't understand that jest of his about taking another unexpected passenger, since the first has given so much satisfaction.”

“This will be the third,” said Jane, carelessly. “You forget the old man—one of those who were shipwrecked, you know—who is going back to England with us. A strange-looking person. His eyes almost frightened me.”

CHAPTER XIV.

ALONE !

The sky smiled down upon him sweetly calm. The wind, rustling softly among the group of cocoa trees on the knoll behind the coral rock on which he stood, seemed to whisper soft assurances of sympathy and companionship. The steady sough of the waves was pleasing and cheerful, and had not yet impressed him with the solemn dreariness that came afterward to be associated with its sound.

Will Yarrel stood looking off to the sparkling sea, adown whose blue-green rim the ship had slipped away and disappeared, and turned back to glance over the solid land behind him, which rose in high boulders of volcanic gray, in-

terspersed with little slopes luxuriant with the lovely tropic verdure, and watered by tumbling cascades of silver sheen plunging from the rocks, with an exultant consciousness of safety and freedom.

“At last, at last!” murmured he, walking to and fro; “I am free from persecution—I am safe from all espionage of friend or foe. Here I am sovereign, with none to dispute my royal will.”

The brown eyes lighted up with a wonderful splendor; a rich glow came to the hitherto pallid cheek.

“I will be happy. I will enjoy this novel, romantic experience!” cried out Will Yarrel. And still smiling, he ran down the slope to the primitive cabin which had stood the shocks of time and weather, and remained to give shelter to any shipwrecked wretch ever since the first attempt to make an English penal settlement of the island. Some charitable whalers had left a few necessary implements and culinary articles indispensable even to a Robinson Crusoe. But Captain Lo had taken care to provide more generously. His hasty sweep of the caboose of the *Sea Foam* had given to his deserted passenger quite a stock of housekeeping goods.

Will Yarrel smiled, yet a tear also glistened in his eye, as he saw the promiscuous heap on the smooth, paved floor.

With a singular, womanish eagerness, he went to settling everything in order, peeping into boxes and bags, packing books neatly, and finally he went out, wrenched off some long, fan-like branches from an unknown shrub, and making a broom of them, swept out the place, and set open the log door to allow the warm air to dry up the damp and musty odor within.

Captain Lo had hung a hammock in one corner, and made ready what he considered a far more important affair, a signal, which the lonely islander could hoist to the top of a tall palm, and thus be likely to insure the notice of any ship whose course led them in sight of the island.

The cabin was on the highest point of land, and commanded a glorious view, alike of the far-stretching ocean of blue, and the almost as billowy sea of green behind; for, between the rocky ridges which ran athwart the island, was a sort of long valley whose dense vegetation amply atoned for the barrenness of the rocky heights. From these last, at irregular intervals, fell the lovely cascades; in some places like a hunter's silver horn; in another misty as a sea-nymph's vail; and again spreading forth broad and fan-like, and giving out a steady monotone of sound which seemed to mock saucily the deep roar of the surf at the edge beyond, where there was always a white wreath of foam, let the waves elsewhere be placed as they might.

Will Yarrel, every time his busy employment led him out of the cabin, paused to look around on this scene with kindling eyes.

"It is beautiful!—so beautiful!" exclaimed he, two or three times. "I do not believe I shall welcome any ship that may come to take me away."

Two hours industriously spent had made quite a transformation in the cabin. Everything looked orderly, and by no means uninviting. The youthful proprietor took a satisfied survey, and then ran off down the slope into a tract of high, verdurous turf that seemed neither grass nor moss, and was studded thickly with the most gorgeous blossoms. He gathered two great bunches, snatching greedily, even when both hands were full, at a certain creamy white, starry flower which wafted to him an odorous sigh of invitation. The only glass vessel was confiscated to their use, and they were set upon the rude table before he thought of putting on the food which his swift and persistent exertions had rendered exceedingly welcome. Of the latter, indeed, there was no lack. Poor, conscience-stricken Captain Lo had left enough for a half-dozen men. Will Yarrel looked at the row of sealed cans of preserved meats and fruits, and

smiled rather wistfully. He brought out the hard bread and cold meat, and a tiny box of guava, and then ran down to the rock which poured its nectar with a playful babble into the hollowed coral basin below, and filled his pitcher. He sat down to the meal evidently in a happy humor, and partook with keen zest, breaking out into a musical laugh every now and then.

“If I had only Robinson Crusoe’s dog and cat,” he said, as he rose, “or,” and the words came slowly, “a single companion, congenial and kind, what a paradise I might find it here!”

A cloud rested a moment on the youthful face, but it faded away, as Will Yarrel, after setting everything back into the closet improvised out of a great box which had held the provisions from the ship, went out on the velvety slope before the cabin door, and sat down there, feasting his eyes upon the scene.

That peculiar, wonderful brightness of the sea and sky, the brilliancy of coloring everywhere, was hazing over, not with the mists, but with the tender dimness of approaching nightfall. Grandly beautiful were the shifting pictures which passed before his entranced vision. Wonderful and most magical of all alchemists and artists is loving Nature, if but an appreciative eye is open to behold and admire. A violet haze crept over the sea in the coves, and under the beetling cliffs. A tender languor brooded over the foliage whose diversified green took on a golden tint. The gray rocks softened to a purple brown, and the leaping water flowing over them was no longer flashing silver, but pearl, with rifts of steel. Violet and gold, and a crimson that outshone the glory of the reddest rose in the Cashmere vales flashed up along the western sky, and transfigured all things.

The vines which had crept unmolested for lonely years till they had matted a thick canopy over the roof and sides

of the little cabin, seemed to have received a Midas touch, and every leaf had a golden outline. The charm was completed when a rush of birds hurried suddenly from the belt of reeds edging the little inlet on the northerly side, and bore on their glistening wings the same rainbow tints that the sky and the flowers showed, and flying, sang brokenly. Will Yarrel sat there in a perfect ecstasy of delight. Presently he broke forth in a rich, silvery voice in a devotional hymn of praise.

He sat there until the glories faded off, and neutral tints and somber shadows crept over sea and sky, and hung low upon the plain below.

The great brown eyes caught the first glimmer of the earliest star that trembled through the tender gloom. When the shining host were all marshaled forth upon the azure field the jubilant voice singing forth its gladness ceased suddenly. Will Yarrel rose and went into the cabin, closed the door, and clambered into the hammock. His evening devotions had been paid there at the glorious altar when the pealing hymn had given forth his grateful praise. He was tired in body and weary also in mind. He fell asleep sweetly and calmly, but at what he judged to be dead midnight, he woke suddenly under startling and unpleasant impressions which he could hardly define.

It was a moment or two ere he became conscious of his situation. He missed vaguely the rocking of the ship and the splashing of the waves, and he put his hand out for the sides of the berth, and finding none sat up, roused into instantaneous wakefulness.

Then he heard the sullen beat of the surf and the lighter tinkle of the waterfall, and remembered all things. It was impossible to sleep again. The solemn silence which fell upon him now, with an ocean beating on all sides, and he the sole human being upon it, oppressed, startled, terrified him. His mood had so utterly changed, that when he re-

membered the triumph and exultation of the previous evening it seemed to him the height of folly and insanity. Trembling, shuddering, his heart beating like hammer strokes, he slid down from the hammock and crept to the door. Alone! utterly, entirely alone. Not another human being nearer than upon that distant coast between which and this deserted isle rolled leagues and leagues of foaming billows. It was horrible, agonizing, heart-rending! Will Yarrel sat down upon the door-step, and covering his face with his hands, burst into a fit of passionate weeping like that of a grieved and terrified child. Once he started up and ran down to the water's edge, unmindful of his stumbling steps, and stretching out his arms shrieked rather than called:

“Oh, Captain Leyard, Captain Leyard, come back! come back! I cannot bear it. I shall die of horror and terror.”

The echoes tossed back the despairing cry.

Then Will Yarrel's sorrow broke out afresh.

“What have I done? oh, what have I done, that the world has dealt so cruelly by me? I have meant no one ill. I have never done a wicked act. Why must I suffer so much?”

He paused abruptly, for there was the sound as of stealthy steps creeping toward him along the wet sand.

Scarcely breathing, the youth stood listening, with dilated eyes seeking vainly to pierce the dimness. Then there was a splash beyond, and the positive certainty of a deep-drawn breath.

Wild animals, savages, every horrible possibility darted through his mind.

With a low shriek, Will Yarrel turned and fled, and gaining the cabin, closed the door, and shoved against it the bench and table both. He sat half an hour listening and trembling, hearing a creature of some sort tramping and

puffing around. After that all was quiet again. Then this trembling sovereign of the deserted isle found the priceless box of lucifer matches and the candles Captain Lo had been thoughtful enough to provide. Illumination of the scene somehow seemed to insure protection. This fright a little dispersed, he was able to judge that the disturbance outside must have come from a crawling turtle or a roving seal. In a little time Will Yarrel removed the barricades from the door, and looked out. The stars were shining, ah, how tenderly and protectingly! Looking up to those solemn heights, wherein immeasurable worlds were noiselessly sailing on an unerring course, Will Yarrel stood rebuked, ashamed, convicted.

The Great Ruler of this illimitable universe was also the loving Father of the humblest earthly child. Why should he tremble? What should he fear here, where primitive innocence reigned, and Heaven watched above? Once more the tears stole down that youthful cheek, but they were no longer hot and bitter. A holy calm, a sweet serenity dispersed rebellion and alarm.

He sat down there on the bank, still gazing upward. They were his friends, his safeguard, his consolation thenceforward—those far off, silent, solemn stars.

It was Will Yarrel's first fright, and his last while the island was his home.

CHAPTER XV.

SAVED.

Chichester Rookery was one of the most charming country seats in a shire filled with beautiful homes and picturesque villas.

Fortunate was that person deemed who received from its noble owners an invitation to enter its choicely culled circle

as a summer guest. Great, then, was General Wainwright's pride and satisfaction when his daughter brought to him the satin-tied, daintily perfumed note of invitation, with a penciled line from the earl himself, insisting that the invalid veteran and his fair daughter should honor them by its acceptance.

"Octavia, my darling, this is beyond any expectation of mine. I scarcely know the Earl of Chichester. I am at a loss to explain this gracious invitation, unless——"

He saw the rich color drifting into Miss Wainwright's cheek, and smiled triumphantly, as he added:

"Ah, I am stupid! To think I was going to accept the compliment for myself! But I am prouder to know it is meant for you, Octavia. The earl is Lord Ronald Falkner's uncle. That explains the whole."

Octavia did not deny that he had seized the right solution, but, leaning her head pensively on her hands, she asked:

"And will you be able to go, papa? You have improved so much of late it really seems practicable."

"There is no harm in trying. I shall have Dixon with me, and I need not mix much with the gay people. Ah, my darling, I shall bask in the reflected glory of my daughter's conquest."

Accordingly in a week afterward they arrived in their own carriage at Chichester Rookery.

They were shown promptly to the most comfortable apartments opening from a suite devoted to their private use, and when sufficient time had been given them to recover from their fatigue, the earl and his aristocratic wife hastened to meet them and give them the most cordial welcome.

"Only a few of our expected guests have arrived as yet," said their noble host. "We wished to have a little cozy visit from you before the rush. Scarcely any one is here beyond our own people, which last of course includes my sister,

Lady Falkner, and her son. I have a surprise for Ronald, Miss Wainwright. He is coming down to-day, and does not dream of the presence of a certain fair guest of ours."

Miss Wainwright was too self-possessed and well-bred to be confused by this little attack, but a brighter color flushed into her cheek.

"And as for you, general, we are going to be as prudent as possible in your behalf," continued the earl, smilingly. "Sir James will come down regularly to look after my sister, and we shall fit up a retreat for the pair of you, into which no one shall intrude without your special permission."

"Lady Falkner, I trust, is not a confirmed invalid," said the general.

"We do not mean she shall be. I am a little anxious about her though. You must not dwell upon your ailments, either of you, but cultivate cheerfulness and light-heartedness, which is the most magical panacea. You will of course be completely at home here, and when you are disposed to shun the confusion of the drawing-room, have no scruples about secluding yourself. Oh, by the way, we have a young man here who is a vastly entertaining and useful person in such a company as we shall have, and he will be very agreeable, general, I am sure, if you want any dull hours whiled away. He came very warmly recommended to me, and is going out to Australia, where he will look after some loose business affairs of mine. I have him down here to hunt up the papers he will require; but I find him so gentlemanly and cultured (besides I understand he has quite high expectations), that I shall gladly introduce him to my guests, among whom I believe there are no susceptible young ladies. Forewarned, forearmed, you know, Miss Wainwright."

Octavia smiled gayly.

"And now, if you please, papa, I will leave you awhile

and pay my respects to Lady Falkner. The countess tells me she is waiting to see me."

The general, taking "discretion as the better part of valor," decided to take his dinner alone in his room. But Octavia was escorted by the earl himself, and in the dining-room received her introduction to the "exceedingly useful and entertaining" young gentleman who was to transact the Australian affairs.

Octavia bit her lip, and then smiled mischievously, while Felix—for it was he—turned white with strangely mingling rage and delight.

"This is Mr. Thorne, Miss Wainwright. Mr.—why, were you acquainted before?"

"Very well acquainted, indeed, your lordship," answered Miss Wainwright. "You were right in your conjectures. My father will be perfectly delighted with your young gentleman. How do you do, Felix?"

Felix mechanically lifted his hand and touched frigidly the outstretched fingers, murmured some inarticulate sentence, and dropped into his place.

Octavia could scarcely explain why she was secretly so angry at his behavior. But she sat throughout the dinner, listening eagerly to the varied and cultured conversation which ensued. She saw Felix, for the first time, in the light of his really brilliant conversational talents, and could not fail to perceive with what flattering deference the noble host followed the young man's words.

He never once addressed Miss Wainwright, but it would have been folly for him to deny how her presence exhilarated him, or that half the object of his animated and eloquent description was to exhibit to her the real value put upon him by these people above her own rank as much as she had presumed herself to be beyond her father's secretary.

As they passed from the dining-room she made a gesture which he was compelled to obey.

“Felix,” said she, authoritatively, “I want you to let me take you up to see papa.”

He bowed coldly and in silence.

Biting her scarlet lip angrily, she said, hastily:

“Papa, at least, has claim upon your good nature. He was fond of you almost to foolishness. He is sick, and a little gratification produces wonderful results. It is for his sake I ask it.”

“I never doubted that, Miss Wainwright. I have very little time to spare from the business which brought me here, but what is at my disposal is at General Wainwright’s service.”

“Come, then, at once,” she said, assuming playfulness to hide her anger and resentment, and, turning to the countess, she added, gayly, “Will not your ladyship come also to witness my father’s surprise and pleasure?”

The latter gave smiling assent, and the trio entered the general’s little parlor just as he was settling himself comfortably for a nap in the easy-chair. His face brightened, and he rose eagerly, with a sincerity of friendship which could not fail to touch Felix, despite his sullenness.

“Why, Felix Thorne, where have you dropped from?”

“Not from the skies, certainly,” said Octavia, meaningly, “he is altogether too wicked for that. Now we can leave you, satisfied that you will be kept in good spirits. He is the same young man whose entertaining society was promised you. Make the most of it, papa.”

“What, the young man going to Australia? Tut, tut, Felix; that is a very stupid movement in you. What can Australia do better than England?”

“She has not told him a single word,” thought Felix, and fell to pondering on her motives for concealment.

Octavia glanced back as she followed the countess down to the drawing-room, and said to herself:

“He is certainly a remarkable person. No one can deny

great powers and mental strength to Felix. Poor Felix! I wonder—no, I do not wonder. I believe he has trampled upon that foolish love of his, and conquered it.”

And then she sighed, and knew not wherefore, and entered the drawing-room and talked pensively with Lady Mary Falkner, and when they asked for her to sing, she hunted up a wild, melancholy air, which made them all shiver, and becoming presently aware of its effect, she struck off into a fairy extravaganza, in the midst of whose gay echoes arrived Lord Ronald, and dispersed both the song and the melancholy.

Felix meanwhile brightened out of his secret perplexities and anxieties to give the old general one of the old-time *tete-a-tetes*, and though he did not give the latter anything like a satisfactory account of his singular and abrupt leave-taking, he kept him entertained and in good humor with all around him.

Octavia glanced around the spacious rooms when she entered them, more charming than ever in her tasteful evening costume, and decided that Felix was still sulky and meant to avoid her. She knew how pleasantly he had beguiled the time for her father, because she had slipped into the general's room to obtain his approval of her dress, for Octavia Wainwright had hitherto taken most pleasure in her toilet, because of the proud sparkle of admiration its effect would bring to a father's eye.

She had looped a spray of jasmine in among the golden braids to-night, from a queer caprice. Would Felix remember how once, when they had been sketching in the garden, he had laid just such a spray across her hair, and smiled approval? And then it occurred to her how odd it was she should be thinking more of pleasing the eye of the humble secretary than of the noble Lord Ronald.

But Felix was nowhere to be seen. Octavia, however, was none the less dazzling in Lord Ronald's eyes.

She moved among the little group like a princess born.

There were some twenty people present, half of them evening visitors from the neighborhood. Presently, out of somebody's sudden inspiration, came the suggestion that there should be impromptu tableaux, and Lord Ronald was prompt to seize upon it. Straightway the younger people repaired to the music-room, and a stage was presently arranged, with a small portable but heavy chandelier, brought from the hall to give additional light, suspended above it.

Octavia was seized upon for a Cleopatra, and was standing on the stage under the chandelier, posed in the attitude required, while Lord Ronald, as Antony, was approaching to kneel before her, when there came a sudden wild shriek, rather than cry, which made them all turn in horror.

Octavia had no time to seek an explanation. A pair of strong arms seized her and leaped across the room. At the same moment there came a crash—the chandelier lay a broken heap upon the floor, the carpet of which, and the light articles lying underneath, were almost instantaneously in a blaze. The hook, upon which the servants had hung the chandelier, was utterly insufficient for the unusual weight. One keen eye had marked its oscillation and suspicious wavering; had seen who stood directly under the massive combination of bronze and crystal, and acted promptly.

For one moment Octavia lay against that shuddering heart and felt its bounding pulsations.

Overcome his love, indeed! She would never again need assurance of the falseness of that imputation.

“Oh, Felix!” cried she, softly, while all around was the wildest confusion, “who can tell what you have saved me from? You are noble and generous, Felix.”

His eyes shone brilliantly with secret joy, but he held himself grave and cold.

He put her safely on a chair, bowing with the most ceremonious politeness.

"I am happy to have been of service to Miss Wainwright."

And he hastened to make himself useful in extinguishing the fire and quieting the alarm of the ladies.

Lord Ronald, although out of the range of the circle beneath the chandelier, was struck by a flying fragment, and his cheek slightly wounded. As soon as he had cleared it from the flowing blood he came, in a transport of grateful relief, and seized Felix by the hand.

"Mr. Thorne, you have made me your life-long debtor! To think what might have happened! That precious life, that glorious loveliness threatened by so frightful a disaster! Oh, sir, what a calamity you have spared us!—what a service you have rendered *me!*"

Every feature of the young lord's face quivered with the earnestness of his agitated heart. His eyes were too misty to see what a ghastliness was on the other's countenance.

Felix spoke hoarsely and through shut teeth. How at that moment his wild hatred for the handsome young nobleman flared up in his passionate heart!

"It is of no consequence, sir," he said; "you owe me nothing."

And he tried to break away, but Lord Ronald's hasty hand held him.

"Owe you nothing?" repeated Lord Ronald. "What! Do you not guess all that she is to me?"

This time his hand was not strong enough to hold. Felix dragged himself away, darted through the door, and never paused until he had gained the night air. At the rear vestibule he paused and turned his sternly set face to catch the cool air and the reviving moisture of the softly descending dew.

Two hours he stood there, motionless, like one of the

carved statues beyond, grim, and dark, and cold, and only once moved or spoke. Then he raised his arm slowly and struck his clenched hand against his forehead.

"Fate is hard to me. Bitterly cruel is it that there should be but one thing in the world beautiful and desirable in my eyes, and yet that one hope be relentlessly crushed!"

There came a stir through the garden branches; a stately figure glided forward from the balcony where she had been stationed watching him.

"Felix," said she, in a voice strangely blended of grief and joy.

"Miss Wainwright," was answered, coldly and angrily.

"You have saved my life probably. Felix, Felix, I cannot leave you to be so bitterly angry with me! What can I say? What can I do?"

He started and moved a step toward her, his whole frame trembling.

"Octavia, there is one word you can say—only one."

"That is impossible," said she, more sadly than scornfully.

But his anger blazed out again.

"Go, go," cried he, fiercely. "Nothing is impossible to a brave and earnest heart. But you are willing to crush my happiness, to ruin my life—by Heaven! I am not sure but you stab your own heart all to gratify your indomitable pride. Go!"

She crept back to the balcony without a word, while Felix stalked away to the house and up to his private apartment.

CHAPTER XVI.

JANE AND WILL.

Great was the curiosity of all on board the good ship *Royal Bess* when they sighted *Trinidad*, and saw the signal

flag, which Captain Lo had left to Will Yarrel, still fluttering from the tall palm.

"Why, there's some one on the island needing help!" exclaimed the mate, snatching up the glass, and peering anxiously through it, and turning to the captain, astonished to find him so cool over the exciting discovery. "How fortunate it is that you came so far out of the course, sir. I actually believe there are other survivors of some disaster needing help."

"Quite likely. The flag certainly calls for an investigation. I shall go ashore," answered Captain Warner, unable to repress a little significant smile, which was not lost upon a keen eye close beside them.

"It is odd enough that you should bring me back to just the spot from which the Sea Foam took me," interposed the old man who, at such a late hour, had concluded to leave his companions in disaster to wait for the expected packet, and had taken passage with the Royal Bess. "I might have staid here all the time, and been vastly more comfortable, I dare say."

Captain Warner gave him a careless glance, for his friend, the master of the Sea Foam, making sure that the old man had taken berths with the others, had given him no hint of his connection with the little romance.

"You didn't leave any of your comrades here by accident, did you?"

"I had no comrades," was the rather sullen reply; "and I should suppose every one in that case would have looked out for himself. The water is bad enough, but a barren island is worse. If once I set my foot on firm English soil, you won't catch me allowing myself to be trapped into any such risks as these."

Jane West happened to be just coming from the companion-way, and heard the remark.

"Do you mean," asked she, "that you were trapped to make the original voyage?"

"Something cussedly like it," answered he, savagely. "But I'll have my pay."

Jane shrank away from the gleaming eye, and went forward on the deck where the sailors were gathered together in a knot discussing the nature of the flag's appeal. One of them had a sore hand, and another a bad cough. She had glided very quietly and unostentatiously into the sphere for which her peculiar education had prepared her. One and all of the crew held a profound respect, as well as an implicit faith, in the new doctor, albeit she was a woman.

When the boat was lowered from the davits; there was a silent but eloquent appeal from many eager faces, but Captain Warner said, shortly:

"None but my own boat's crew and the ladies can accompany me on this landing. When we return, the other boat may take the rest of you with the empty water casks."

The sea was unusually smooth, and a landing was effected without much difficulty. Before the boat touched the rocky shore, however, they discovered a slender, graceful figure standing on the point watching them. The attitude was somehow a puzzle to Jane West, who had her own grave, cool way of taking first impressions, half shy and reluctant, half eager welcome.

"Why, it is a boy, and he seems to be alone," exclaimed Mrs. Warner, and then she added, in a doubtful voice, "but it cannot be, of course. How could he come to this lonely island all alone?"

"We can soon discover how it is," said the captain, helping them to scramble up the coral ledge, and proceeding himself a little in advance to meet the young stranger who came slowly down toward them.

"You have seen my signal," said Will Yarrel, in a voice slightly tremulous with agitation. "It was very kind in you to come, sir."

"Yes, my lad, and I came out of my course to seek the signal. I hailed the Sea Foam in Table Bay, and Captain Leyard sent me to look after you."

"God bless him! Then they have had a safe voyage."

"So far at least as the Capes; of the rest one cannot say. Will you go on board the ship at once?"

"What ship is it, and where bound?"

"The Royal Bess, for Liverpool."

The brown eyes held a misty, troubled look as of perplexed inward communing. A little inward sigh broke through the smile with which he replied:

"Thank you. I will go as soon as I have packed into my trunk a few mementoes of my peaceful sojourn here. I suppose I may take the trunk in the boat?"

"Certainly. But you will please corroborate the statement I shall make, that you were left over accidentally from a ship stopping for water. I will manage that the trunk shall be covered, so as not to draw attention."

"You have ladies with you," and Will Yarrel turned toward them, with the look of one long buried in barbarism and coming unexpectedly upon signs of civilization.

"My wife; and a true, steady, intelligent creature, who is a shining light and an ornament of her sex, whether people know it or not," answered the gallant captain; "and if the cabin of the Royal Bess isn't a sunny and happy place, it's not their fault, you may be sure. Come and see them, my lad."

And in a moment more Will was shaking hands with Mrs. Warner and Jane West.

The constraint which had shown itself with the master of the Royal Bess dropped off before the ladies.

Will Yarrel, smiling and almost gay, was presently doing

the honors of the little cabin, and telling over the romantic attractions of his solitary kingdom.

“And you have enjoyed this long time of solitude—you were not afraid?” said Mrs. Warner, in profound amazement and a little admiration.

“I was thoroughly frightened the first night, and thoroughly cured also,” answered he, “and though in all these days of solitude I have been often sad, filled with wild yearnings, I have never known such torturing fears as have assailed me in the Christian land toward which your ship is sailing.”

A wistful appeal for womanly sympathy glistened in the brown eyes which turned to Jane West.

“It is singular,” he added, a moment after, “when your ship came in sight, instead of falling on my knees in grateful joy, I was seized with a great horror and shuddering, as if it were bringing me some woeful experience.”

“And that was why you hesitated so, and waited for us to come up to you? If it had been me, I should have rushed down to the water's edge shouting in joy,” said Mrs. Warner, smiling. “But it has passed now, has it not? Be sure the *Royal Bess* has only kindly treatment and a hospitable welcome for you.”

“Yes,” said Will Yarrel, answering Mrs. Warner, but looking at Jane West, “my alarm has passed. I feel satisfied now that I have found friends I may trust.”

Jane West had not been educated to be demonstrative, but she felt an answering thrill at her heart, and pondered over it.

When they had explored the island, collected their curiosities, and enjoyed a charming rest at the door-step of the vine-wrapped cabin, the party returned again to the ship, and Will Yarrel accompanied them. He stood a moment on the reef before he stepped into the boat, and the wistful brown eyes took a mute farewell of everything. And it was

noticed by them all that, after the ship was gained, he never once turned his face toward the island.

The rest of the ship's company, naturally enough, examined the returning boat with keen interest, and every eye was fixed upon the slender figure which followed the ladies up the gangway.

Will Yarrel did not reciprocate their interest. After the first careless glance he lowered his eyes and followed the ladies into the cabin. He was not aware, then, of the swarthy face, with the basilisk eyes, which looked over to him from the owner's careless station by the mainmast. He did not see those eyes dilate suddenly with incredulous astonishment, darken with perplexity, and at last break into a glimmer of cunning, triumphant satisfaction.

The elderly passenger did not make his appearance at all that day. He kept his little state-room in the forward quarters all day, with a severe headache, he told the steward's boy, who came in with his food.

Nothing was thought of it. He had not hitherto been at all social, and indeed had no occasion to be seen at all in the after cabin. If any one had taken interest enough to notice, they might perhaps have wondered at his absence from the deck, which had been his constant resort.

No one did, however, and they had been a week at sea from the island before Will Yarrel became aware of his presence on board. And then it was the result of an accident.

Mrs. Warner had gone on deck to take the sun, with her husband, which was a favorite recreation of hers, one noon-day, and Jane West and Will Yarrel were alone in the cabin, sitting at the table, on which the chart was spread open, ready for the captain to come down and mark out the course.

Will had been following the zizzag lines meditatively, and then looking forward, he had found the English chan-

nel, and there the slender forefinger had stopped, and the winsome young face gloomed over with melancholy, and a heavy, heavy sigh proclaimed the inward disquiet which was so sore a burden to that youthful breast.

Jane West, with those grave, calm eyes of hers, had read more deeply than the others.

"Will," said she, "I almost believe you dread reaching England as much as I do."

"As you! I never suspected you were afraid of the arrival," answered he.

"Not afraid," she returned; "but I dread to have it come. I shall be sorry to lose this pleasant family life and to drift out alone upon the world, as seems to be my fate. Besides, I have an exceedingly unpleasant duty waiting for me there."

Will Yarrel caught at one word.

"Alone!" said he. "Are you also alone in the world?"

"Quite alone; unless I am able to make new friends."

"I should never have thought it; you seem so cheerful, and strong, and self-reliant."

And here the youth sighed again.

Jane leaned forward, her eyes shining, a rich color flushing the grave face into positive beauty.

"Child," said she, "something draws me to you. There is one secret of yours that I have already guessed. Do not start, nor blush. It is sacred with me, and I need no assurance from you that cruel circumstances pressed you to it. Let me tell you my story; and then, if you choose—only if you choose, dear child—show me all that is in your own heart."

Will Yarrel concealed his face with his clasped hands, but the tears of mingled shame and grief stole through the slender fingers.

In a low, grave voice, Jane related her history. She con-

cealed nothing except the nature of the sacred contents of the package she was carrying to England.

“You see, dear, that there is no friendly welcome waiting me, no home whose door will open cordially at my approach. But it does not disturb me much. I think I have more than an ordinary woman’s bravery and energy, or else it is owing to the generous and careful education of the noblest man who has lived in these degenerate days. Some people have called me masculine, but down in my heart is the ever-living refutation of the falsehood. I yearn so much for a loving heart to answer to the friendship of mine. I am sure I should be as happy as it is possible for me to be if only I had a female friend to whom I would be sister, mother, protector, as far as lies in my power. My poor child, show me that friend. Relieve your heart of this unnatural burden. Tell me your sorrows, and where I cannot banish, let me share them.”

Will Yarrel drew away his hands and fell down at her feet, burying the agitated face in her lap.

“Oh, you are so good and kind! You have discovered my secret, and yet you do not overwhelm me with reproach. Take me, help me, keep me, and if a love such as a grateful heart like mine has power to give will satisfy you, be sure you shall have no cause of complaint. I will tell you all—everything.”

Jane threw her arms around the trembling figure, and kissed the broad, white forehead with a tender joy that was marvelous even to her, it seemed to have so pure and dear a meaning.

“It has its meaning,” murmured she. “I am sure it has, and some time we shall see it, and understand why we came to that lonely island and found you here.”

They sat, still fondling each other’s hands, now and then softly kissing each other, two desolate hearts made happy, as a barren waste revives beneath the blessed rain, or a

dreary winter scene grows beautiful and warm beneath returning sunshine.

Beyond them in the state-room, outside the partition which divides the two cabins, once or twice there was a rustle, but neither of the preoccupied talkers heeded it.

Jane presently bent down and said, gently, as she looked into the brown eyes which were beaming loving joy and trust:

“And now you shall tell your story, and I will do my best to help you. And I will show you the box which contains the precious legacy I am to carry to England. I keep it there on the shelf above my state-room door. And what am I to call you when I talk the foolish loving talk for which my tongue already aches?”

“What you please, dear friend; but I have a claim to that by which you have known me. My true name is Wilhemine,” answered Will Yarrel.

Behind the partition, crouching close against the state-room side, was a greedy ear, a glittering, triumphant eye. The old man, with the white hair and basilisk eye, rubbed his hands gleefully, and said to himself:

“Ho! ho! Fate, that has thrown me so often, sets me again upon my feet. I have found the fair Wilhemine, and I will learn what the last bequest of Arthur Morley to a certain noble English lady may contain.”

“Ho! ho!” repeated Mathew Merle.

CHAPTER XVII.

TRAPPED.

Maurice Middleton had kept his word to his father, and was searching over the great town to find some glimpse or trace of Mathew Merle.

Hitherto unsuccessful, he had not much hopefulness as he sauntered down one morning early toward the Waterloo dock, of Liverpool.

A ship was just entering the dock; and, drawn by that dreamy sentiment which is too vague and romance-whispering to be curiosity, he went down along the quay to the water's edge, and watched to see, as everybody must who has the privilege, that delightful mystery, a ship coming back from a foreign voyage, and first touching the home shore.

There were the usual confusion and noise in settling matters, and coming to a safe anchorage, and for a little time the bustle of hauling ropes and lowering sails, and running to and fro of jubilant sailors, concealed from him a group standing on the quarter-deck. But presently Maurice was able to make them out—even see the faces of the two ladies distinctly, and to remark the graceful figure of the lad who stood beside them, but kept his face toward the shore.

Something in the expression of the wistful brown eyes touched Maurice, and roused the mighty spirit that is in every true man's soul, whether it slumbers drowsily or keeps a vigilant and earnest watch.

“The lad is in trouble of some sort,” said he; “he almost seems afraid of the shore. I wonder what it is!”

He was not long in doubt. The plank was put down from the gangway, and gave passage to the wharf.

He who was evidently master of the vessel came first, and gave orders for a carriage to be hurried down to take the ladies to the town. The others followed, and stood waiting in a little group, not talking, as he fancied the newly arrived voyagers ought, joyously and gratefully, but in low and subdued voices.

Maurice retreated a little, and leaned against a pile of coffee-bags, which bore with them a foreign scent stolen from tropic shores.

JANE THREW HER ARMS AROUND THE TREMBLING FIGURE.—(P. 158.)



"And do you insist, my dear Jane, that we part here? I am sorry, very sorry. I can't tell you how much our voyage together has done to attach me to you. I almost hoped you would be willing to stay with me. The very sailors will be sorry to lose their 'doctor.' Can't we secure you somehow as the property of the Royal Bess, and keep you for all her voyages," said the elderly lady, in tones loud enough to reach Maurice distinctly.

The woman addressed, who had a fresh, frank face, and grave, steady eyes, answered promptly:

"Indeed, indeed, Mrs. Warner, that would be a very tempting fate. But my duty lies in another way. I told you before there was no idler's life waiting for me when I reached England. You know I have taken Will under my wing, besides, and I must set him a good example. No, much as we should enjoy being in your company, I think it wiser for us to set at once upon our own business, and use ourselves to depend upon our own resources. Besides, there is the errand which brought me to England, instead of sending me to America. I do not feel right to delay it an hour. I mean to have the carriage take me promptly to the London train, and Will has decided to go with me. But, if you please, do not state the fact to any one of the ship's company. Let them think we accompany you."

The lad, who had been casting furtive glances toward the ship, pulled nervously at the speaker's sleeve. He was standing nearer to Maurice than the others, and the latter therefore heard his low ejaculation:

"Oh, Jane, let us get away while he is on board. Don't wait for a carriage to come here. Let us go and find one."

"Hush, Will! Your terror is absurd. Why will he care to follow us, when he has not discovered your identity?"

"Oh, Jane, don't trust to that. He gave me a look as I came across the plank, and I read there in his terrible eye

that he knew me. He has only pretended ignorance. He is waiting to get me ashore, and away from my friends, and then he will seize me. Oh, let us go!"

"But we cannot carry your trunks, child. There, the carriage is coming. It is easier than I thought. He is on board packing his bundles, and we shall be away, and out of sight before he comes to the wharf. You must keep up courage, Will; or how shall we get along with all that is before us?"

"It is only when he is near that I am afraid. Oh, I am only afraid of him!"

"Well, well, poor child, we shall soon escape him. Only see what a Babel it is up yonder. He could no more find us than a straw in a whirlpool when once we drift into that moving mass. We must secure our luggage, and then we will hie away."

The captain had been again to the ship, and he appeared now, followed by two sailors carrying a heavy trunk, which was transferred to the carriage, and the sailors returned for the rest of the luggage. A second carriage came lumbering down, and quite a crowd of idle gazers, as well as the regular gang of stevedores, filled up the way.

But Maurice perceived that those wistful brown eyes of the handsome lad kept close watch of the ship, and presently he was sure they had discovered the object of their terror, for a wild look of fright swept across the youthful face, and he grasped desperately at the woman's arm.

"Oh, Jane, there he is! He is coming ashore now."

"Hush, Will! You must not be so frightened. Get into the carriage, and draw the curtain over the window. There will be some delay yet. If I think he is watching, or following, I will consent to get out, and we will hide in the crowd up above there. But I do not believe he has the slightest suspicion."

The lad reluctantly obeyed her suggestion. He entered

the coach which had last arrived, and pulled down the curtain.

Maurice Middleton was now thoroughly interested, and he kept close watch, from his screen of coffee-bags, both of the coach and the ship.

He was not aware, however, of all the significance of these little incidents until he saw a slouching figure, with a rusty black cloak thrown over his shoulders, and a soft felt hat thrust down until it almost covered his ears, carrying a small bundle tied up in a red silk handkerchief, step over the stern of the ship, and swinging himself down by a dangling rope, come up to the quay, at some distance from the gangway plank. He plunged directly into the crowd of stevedores, and was lost to view. But by and by he came again in sight, and this time Maurice was certain he was holding some sort of communication by means of a kind of hand telegraphing with the driver of the first coach, out of range of the passengers' observation. He tried to see his face distinctly, but failed.

In a few moments more the captain took leave of the ladies, shook hands warmly with the lad, and returned to his ship, while the two coaches drove off.

Maurice, curiously impelled to see the last of the affair, followed at a quick pace. At the street entrance to the dock the driver of the second coach halted a moment, and in that brief time the man in the rusty coat came forth from a retreat amid bales and boxes, keeping so far in front as almost to endanger himself from the heels of the horses. The driver lent him a helping hand, and he was pulled up to the coachman's box, where he settled himself comfortably, drawing his old cloak still higher, and dropping his head upon his breast, so his face was scarcely discernible.

"He means mischief," thought Maurice. "I wonder what I can do to let the boy know he is here."

And he quickened his pace, and did his best to keep the

coach in sight, and managed indeed to follow its track, although he came near losing it, and following the wrong one when the coaches separated.

At length, however, flushed and panting, Maurice entered the great building where passengers take the train for London, and saw the grave-eyed, yet pleasant-faced lady, and the melancholy and handsome youth purchasing their tickets at the office. The coachman was looking after the luggage, but nothing could be seen of the man in the dingy cloak.

Rather doubtful of the value of the information, but somehow resolute to give it, Maurice walked up to the boy, and said respectfully and kindly:

“My lad, I saw you land from the ship down below, and overheard a little of your conversation, and I gathered that you were afraid of some one following you.”

The brown eyes widened, deepened until the brown iris was nearly black. The breathing was shortened by a little gasping sob, and the boy stretched out his hands toward the lady.

“Oh, Jane——”

“Please be quiet, and try to look unconcerned. I have not told you what I wish to say, and the man I dare say is watching us. There was a man muffled up in a faded cloak, with a cap on his head, who got off the ship, and seemed to be hiding from you. Your coach took him up by the side of the driver just as you left the dock entrance, and he was on the coach when it stopped here. That is all I have to say. I do not know whether the information is of consequence or not, but I ran all the way from the dock to tell you.”

“You are kind, very kind. Oh, Jane, do you hear what he says? We are tracked; we are followed. *He* is here somewhere.”

The lady he called Jane turned quickly.

“You must be less excitable, Will. If he is really here,

there is the more need of caution. How do you know it is he?"

Maurice was here obliged to repeat what he had already told.

"Go and sit down, Will," said the lady, in a tone of gentle authority. "Sit down there in the ladies' waiting-room, and I will go myself and look the place over, to be certain if the man on the coach box was he."

"I cannot bear to trust myself an inch away from you, dear Jane," faltered the lad. "What if he should come?"

"I shall not leave the building."

And in her prompt, resolute, collected fashion, Jane West walked around the building along the promenade, peering sharply into every nook, and closely scanning the face of every man she met. Sharp-eyed as she was, she did not know that a keen ear caught every word of her last speech, and the great door of the luggage room, half opened, as it had been carelessly left, concealed the man in the old cloak, who slipped out the rear door upon the street, and spoke a sharp sentence into the coachman's ear, while he thrust a sovereign into his hand. Jane was thorough usually in whatever task she undertook. Finding no trace of the object she sought, she crossed down and went around out of their sight on the other side of the building.

The boy stood in the door-way of the ladies' waiting-room, trying to look calm and collected, and Maurice waited a little without, half vexed with himself for having meddled at all with the matter.

While the lady was still absent, the coachman who had brought them came hastily across the building from the direction where she had disappeared.

"The lady says you are to come as quick as possible to my coach, and let me drive you to a place where she will meet

you. She could not come herself, because she was afraid to be seen by the person who is following you. Them be her words, master. She will take another train for London. And she said you was to lose no time."

"I will come—oh, yes, I will come," exclaimed the lad, his whole face blanching, and he almost ran to the coach.

Maurice had heard the whole, and, like the lad, doubted nothing of the truth of the message. He followed to take the last look of a face which somehow had taken a strong hold upon his fancy. The door was closed, and the coach whirled away, driven at a clattering pace. Turning, Maurice confronted Jane West.

"Where is Will? What has become of Will?" demanded she, a swift terror spreading across her steady countenance.

"Good heavens, madam, did you not send for him? He has gone in the coach. The driver said you sent for him."

She flung up her hands in a passionate gesture.

"The poor child was right. Mathew Merle has found him out. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Mathew Merle!" ejaculated Maurice, the blood leaping suddenly through his veins with an electric thrill. "Do you mean that the man in the cloak was Mathew Merle?"

"The man on board the ship—the only one poor Will dreaded—was named Mathew Merle," answered she. "Do you know him?"

"Tell me what he was like."

"A strange, uncanny face, dark, withered, wrinkled, with wild eyes, black as the blackest thing you can imagine, and wicked looking, and long white locks, bleached to the silverest gray."

"By heavens, it was the man himself!" exclaimed Maurice, striking his hands together angrily. "To think he should be so near, and I have lost him. Ah, if I had seen

through the disguise and got my hands on him, you should have gone unmolested."

"He must be a wicked creature; and poor Will is in his power. Sir, you have already been very kind. You have interested yourself for us. Oh, tell me what I shall do to find poor Will!"

"Rest assured that I will do all that I can. The case is my own now. I have been hunting for that man for months. How came he on your ship?"

"He was wrecked, and taken from a deserted island in the midst of the ocean."

"Felix was right, then. I never believed a word of the story before," murmured Maurice.

"Our ship took him at Cape Town. It was so mysterious that he and Will should have met on the *Royal Bess*. Oh, that dear, timid child! to think that those foreboding fears were prophetic! What shall I do to find poor Will?"

"I will do my best. I will take the first carriage I can find and drive swiftly; though, amid all these turns, who can judge of the route?"

"And I—what shall I do?"

"Remain here until you learn of my success. I must not delay another moment. Take this card with my address."

He left her without waiting for her address, hailed the first coach he saw, and went at a swift pace down the street on the track of the vehicle which had borne away the handsome boy and the missing witness.

They went two squares at a headlong pace, and then the coachman pulled up in obedience to a hasty signal from his passenger, who, however, did not wait to give him any explanation, but pushed open the door and plunged into the crowd gathered in the magnetic fashion of great cities with the first show of any unusual excitement.

A coach stood with open door as far ahead as they could see, and down a cross street a boy was flying along, while a man in a faded flapping cloak, his cap gone, and the gray locks streaming in the wind, was hurrying after.

Maurice considered a moment, and then dashed ahead down a second street, which he knew must intersect the other, and waited at the corner. As the flying figure appeared he stepped forward, and in spite of the lad's shriek of dismay, caught him in his arms and rushed into an apothecary's store.

"What is it; any one hurt?" asked the chemist.

He had no answer, for Maurice, looking around hastily, discovered a rear door, and hurried through it into a narrow lane.

The lad lay stirless in his arms—he had fainted.

"Here's a position for me," muttered Maurice, panting for breath, as he heard the hue and cry being raised in the street beyond.

A bright thought came to him. An old school-fellow of his, lately married, lived in this vicinity, and he had called upon him the day previous. The rear of his house must have its gate-way in this very lane. He looked about anxiously and found the little brass plate bearing his name. Never was there a more welcome sight. He pushed open the gate and entered, bolting it behind him and running across the yard, shoved up the basement window, and leaped in.

The servant, sitting at table taking her lunch, leaped upon her feet and screamed lustily.

"Be still, simpleton," said Maurice, authoritatively. "Don't you know me? I was here yesterday, and dined with your master. Where is Mrs. Grey? I must see her at once."

Her scream brought all in the house upon the scene, so there was no need for the girl to call her mistress.

“Why, Mr. Middleton!” ejaculated the pale little mistress.

“I beg your pardon, Mrs. Grey. The circumstances are peculiar. Will you allow me to come up stairs to a private room, and pray, good people, if any one comes don’t let them know this poor lad is here.”

“What a beautiful face!” exclaimed Mrs. Grey, reassured, and prompt to respond to the call for her sympathy. “Bring him up to my room and I will see what I can do. You do not think him dead?”

“Heaven forbid! It is only a fright. I am so thankful to have saved him. He was being carried off against his will, and must have leaped from the coach. Tell him he is safe, and do all you can for him. I must hurry down to the London station to bring his friend here. Besides I had better show myself in the street. I am positive no one saw where I came.”

He gave her no time to demur, but hurried to the front entrance and out upon the crowded thoroughfare. He searched the station over, but the lady was not to be seen. After a useless search for her, not daring to leave any address with the employees there to guide her, he returned to his friend’s house and his self-imposed charge.

The lady of the house met him with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks, and a rather haughty toss of the head.

“Is he better?” exclaimed Maurice. “Has he recovered?”

“Quite recovered?” answered the lady, dryly. “Really I must say, Mr. Middleton, this is very extraordinary conduct.”

“I know it is, but how could I help it? When I tell you the story, you will not wonder I did what I could to save the poor boy.”

“Boy!” repeated Mrs. Grey, with increasing acrimony of

tone. "Neither of you are able to deceive me. I have sent for my husband. Boy indeed!"

Maurice stared at her in amazement.

"Why, Mrs. Grey, what do you mean? How have I offended you? What can you mean?"

"I mean that your boy is a young and very beautiful girl, Mr. Middleton, and really you must take her away from here."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Maurice, and went hastily into the room toward which the lady flung out an indignant hand.

The handsome, melancholy Will sat there, with both slender hands clasped over the scarlet face, the tears dripping down the cheeks.

"Oh, sir! Was it you who saved me? Where is Jane? Oh, take me to Jane! Take me somewhere, I beg of you!"

He knew now that Mrs. Grey was right. Perhaps he understood better the chivalrous longing to save and help, which the brown eyes had first awakened. But Will Yarrel never guessed a word of it, from his quiet, respectful manner.

"I told you I would take care of you. You shall go from here as soon as possible," he said.

Will Yarrel looked a moment steadfastly and searchingly into his face, then held out his hand, with a smile that was more pathetic than many another's passion of tears.

"Thank you, sir. I know I can trust you. Heaven is kind, and raises up friends for me according to my need."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"LOST!"

A post-chaise drove leisurely into the broad avenue of Chichester Rookery, one pleasant afternoon, and the gay

group of noble visitors gathered there, partly from the moment's lack of diversion, and partly from innate curiosity, gathered at the broad windows, to watch the arrival dismount.

"It is a lady!" exclaimed Octavia Wainwright, in accents of surprise.

"I wonder who it can be?" added the countess, knitting her fair forehead a little. "I am positive no one is expected who would come in that style. What is she like?"

"Some tradeswoman or milliner come to solicit your patronage. She has that sort of air," contributed Lord Ronald.

"It is a good, steady face, but her dress has hadly an English look. I think you are right, Ronald. She is a business woman of some sort."

"A visitor to some of the servants," suggested another.

The earl burst into a laugh.

"Come," said he, "here is a chance for a general excitement. We shall soon be able to learn the object of the woman's visit. She is already summoning the porter. Let us have a wager all around, and every one guess at the object of her coming, and her calling. The one who wins shall have the privilege of arranging the details of our next excursion, and every one of us shall be compelled to obey his or her behests for the day."

There followed a general laughing approval of the plan, and many merry jests.

"Who said she was a milliner?"

"I," said Lord Ronald. "Ten to one I am correct. That woman has been used to managing her own affairs shrewdly, you may be sure."

"I think she is some strong-minded champion of somebody or other's injured rights, and has come for the earl's help and signature," said Octavia, shrugging her shoulders.

"To be sure, that might be. What do you say, Lady Mary?" asked the countess, turning to her sister-in-law, who was paying her daily visit to the drawing-room, and whose easy-chair had been drawn up to the bay-window, so that she obtained a good view of the woman's face as she ascended the steps.

"I don't know, indeed, but somehow I fancy she has come to see some of the servants; the housekeeper, probably, for she looked like a person of refinement. And I think she brings with her bad news, for did none of you see how she stopped to shudder as she reached the steps? and her face looked up to me set and stern."

"Nobody but you would have thought up such a pathetic bit of romance," said Lord Ronald, smiling upon his mother with that tenderness of expression so becoming to him. "But now for the rest of the wise guesses. Come, fair ladies and shrewd gentlemen, make known your decree."

He took out his gold pencil-case and ivory tablet, and wrote down the names, and against each the guess its owner had made. He was reading them over, amid a little uproar of laughter, when a servant entered.

"A lady in the reception-room to see her ladyship, Lady Mary Falkner."

Another burst of merriment greeted the announcement.

"Oh, Lady Mary, now you can tell us exactly! Pray do not grant her too long an audience; we shall be so impatient."

"Did she send no name or card?" asked Lady Mary. "I am positive I never saw that face before."

"Not at all, your ladyship, but she bade me say she had followed you from your residence in town, and was very anxious to see you a few moments on business of importance."

"I have lost myself, evidently," said her ladyship, rising

with a listless smile. "It must be a tradeswoman of some sort."

"Don't delay your return!" called merry voices after her.

The smile with which she had left the drawing-room was still on her face, as Lady Mary entered the reception-room.

A plainly dressed, grave-eyed, and just now marbly pale woman stood in the center of the room waiting for her. They were a contrast, striking and suggestive, had any one been there to have seen them, those two, Lady Mary, so fair, and delicate, and frail, in her dainty garments, her gemmed hands, her noble looks of aristocratic delicacy and helplessness, and Jane West, still, grave, quiet, but with a world of energy, and strength, and resolution on the grave lips, the calm eyes, the firm hands.

Struck somehow by the deep passion held down resolutely, which her face and attitude bespoke, Lady Mary bowed courteously, and said, gently waving her thin, white hand toward a chair.

"Be seated, please. You asked to see me. I am Lady Mary Falkner."

"Thank you, I do not care to sit," answered Jane, not saying what she thought—that no power should compel her to sit in friendliness by the side of the woman who had terribly wronged her dead master. "I came to you in consequence of Doctor Morley's request. I have just arrived from Australia. I have brought to you a packet he kept sacredly and left to my charge."

"Oh! oh!" gasped the noble lady, dropping into a chair, white as a ghost and shivering from head to foot.

Jane had no pity for her. On the contrary, her heart was full of deadly anger and fierce indignation. This woman—this woman in her French silks, with her diamonds and daintiness—oh, what a piercing thorn had her

soft hands pressed against the noblest heart that ever beat in a man's bosom ! What a slow torture had she given out to that heroic, devoted soul ! But for her—but for her—what rich joy and blessing might have blossomed in Jane's own life ! Pity her ? No ! Jane, so tender hitherto to the pangs of the humblest creature, stood there relentless and hard as iron.

“ Doctor Morley is dead. Perhaps you know it. I lived with him many years. I did what I could to assuage the grief and sorrow of the noblest man who has lived in these degenerate days. But he is dead now, and his trials ended.”

The lady was still gasping and trembling. She looked longingly toward the silver tray standing on the little table with glasses and ice pitcher.

It was a hard thing for Jane to do, but when her physician's eye saw that her noble companion was suffering severely and nearly fainting, she poured out a glass of water and carried it to her, and held it while the ghastly lips swallowed it greedily.

“ I shall be better in a few moments. If you will be good enough to help me, I should like to hear the rest in my own room.”

After a moment's hesitation, Jane gave her the help of her strong arm, and thus together they mounted the great staircase and entered the luxurious apartment fitted up for her sitting-room. The dressing-maid, busy there dusting out a jewel casket, looked up in surprise.

“ Leave the room, Madge ; this is a friend of mine come for a confidential talk with me.”

The girl went, leaving the toilet-table littered with jewels.

Jane put her into the easy-chair, and stood up before her.

"Sit down, dear child; sit down close beside me and tell the whole," said Lady Mary.

Jane's lip curled, and she remained bolt upright.

"Madam," said she, "it is best you should not take a wrong impression. You said I was a friend of yours. I ask you how that can be, when I am Doctor Morley's friend, and know the whole story of his life? While I remain to discharge my duty to him I shall be able to stand."

"So harsh and angry!" moaned the lady, and then she wrung her hands. "But I deserve it—more and worse. But do not think I have been unpunished. The long agony of a life like mine is beyond telling, or I would show it to you. And I loved him—from first to last I have loved him."

Jane's face now was superb in its scorn.

"You *loved* him!" said she, fiercely; "and you did him the deadliest wrong one human soul can work another—for such things as these you turned away from the priceless jewel of his love."

She flung out her strong, work-hardened hands toward the gems, blazing in diamond, and ruby, and emerald, glimmering on the table, with a look of supreme contempt.

It was Lady Mary's turn to grow indignant. She started up with blazing eyes, her delicate form for once haughty and self-reliant.

"Be still!" cried she. "What do you know about such things? I tell you if this room had been piled from floor to ceiling with diamonds more valuable than any Indian princess ever saw, they could not have won from him one look or thought of mine. But there were influences which could not be put aside; there were more precious things at stake—honor, name, position, life itself. What was I to do? Torn this way, and yearning with all my soul in another—

confronted with the direst possibilities—what wonder that my eyes were blinded? Alack, alack! I meant to do the best thing. I cajoled myself as well as deceived him. Let it pass. Why must I be stretched continually on this agonizing rack? Woman, tell me your errand and go!”

“It is soon done,” answered Jane West. “Doctor Morley was my friend as well as master. He trusted me with a great deal, although he held back the secret which eat into his life like a burning coal. He showed me a box one day.”

She paused a moment, for her throat was dry, and something very like a sob broke in upon the steadiness of her voice.

Lady Falkner was looking at her wistfully, forgetting her words in the ideas they suggested.

“You lived with him!” said she, eagerly. “Oh, happy woman! You saw him every day. He received little attentions of yours, no doubt.”

“He did,” replied Jane, with one of her rare smiles. “I devoted my time and heart to his service. Heaven be praised that I know I succeeded in soothing away a little of his dreariness and pain. His diary will show you that he was good enough to stoop so much as to cherish a kindly regard for a poor girl like me. That remembrance is what I live upon. It is in his service that I have braved all the dangers that lie between Australia and this cold land of yours. It is a crown more honorable and precious in my sight than your jeweled coronet, which I place upon my own forehead when I call myself Doctor Morley’s friend. Look you, your ladyship, it will be more enduring than any of your proud distinction up there above.”

“I know it,” said Lady Falkner, in a low, bitter tone. “From the depths of my heart I envy you. If you like, I will humble my unworthy forehead to touch the hem of your stainless garment.”

Jane West drew back with a shudder, and drew out from under her shawl a small Indian box.

“Doctor Morley once showed me this box in the secret drawer of his secretaire. He said when he was gone I was to take it in charge, and deliver it myself to the address. I have been at much pains and some peril to fulfill the request, but it is here at last. Take it, madam, and oh! if your conscience is really racked as you declare, confess before Heaven the terrible wrong you have done to that sainted man. It is the diary of his life since you parted with him that night of the sailing of the Australian packet. It may explain to you still more thoroughly his self-abnegation and devotion. He returns to you also a packet of papers which he held all the time; a mass of proof which he had only to show to the world, and his own fair name would have shown out more brightly still, and the guilt of another been established beyond the whispering of a doubt. And this overwhelming proof has lain there, in that secret drawer in Sydney, all these years, and Doctor Morley, with the iron cutting into his soul, has borne and kept silence.”

Lady Mary started up, her eyes glittering with wild alarm.

“You knew it all, all?” she cried; “you, a stranger?”

“Be at peace,” said Jane, almost contemptuously. “I am Doctor Morley’s friend; because he wished it, not to save you, I also bury this thing forever. But it is hard, bitter hard,” she murmured, in a deeper tone. “When I think of the life you blighted; when I remember what might have been, even in the latter days, but for you, I am tempted to forget I have been taught a Christian spirit; I long to spurn and curse you.”

“There is no need,” said Lady Falkner, in a hollow voice. “I am already cursed. Here and here!”

And she laid her thin hands, one upon her forehead and

the other against her palpitating heart, and looked so wretched, so utterly miserable, that Jane was touched.

In a moment more she held out her hands.

“Give it to me. It will be very precious, though it may sting me with remorse; and try to have a little pity for one who was driven by a dire extremity and a timid disposition to be a partner in this monstrous wrong. The proofs you say are here, and the diary.”

“They are. I read them all through, and relocked the box, and have never opened it since. There is the key.”

She pushed away the jewels with a scornful hand, and set the box upon the table, and herself thrust in the key, turned it, and swung back the lid.

Lady Falkner watched her like one fascinated. Which face of the pair was the paler one could not say.

But suddenly Jane's face grew almost purple. She staggered back with a great cry, and wrung her hands.

The box was empty.

“I have come all this weary way only to lose the treasure Doctor Morley gave to my care,” said she, with a hollow groan.

“Lost!” shrieked Lady Falkner. “You do not, cannot mean that any one else has those proofs!”

“Heaven only knows!” answered Jane, covering her face, and trying, through the wild rush of thoughts, to find a solution of the mystery.

She started forward at last.

“Ah! I have the truth now. Mathew Merle, the cunning villain! Poor Will declared always that he heard our mutual confessions. He has stolen the contents of that box. But I will find him; I will find him. Oh, Doctor Morley, to think I should have bungled so in this errand of yours!”

And without a look toward the half-fainting lady, Jane turned, hurried out of the room, found her way to the outer

entrance, and, springing into the chaise, was driven swiftly away.

The guests in the drawing-room merrily dispatched the countess to learn the success of the wager.

That lady found her sister-in-law lying on the floor as cold and white and rigid as a corpse.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MISSING WITNESS.

After Maurice Middleton left her, Jane West waited at the station in a state of uncontrollable excitement, despite her calm temperament. The moments dragged as slowly as hours, and seemed presently each one to increase her alarm and deepen her agitation. She had taken a seat at the door of the ladies' retiring-room, and from thence kept watch with feverish eyes of everything that passed within the building.

She knew the moment Mathew Merle crossed the threshold of the great door-way, and she confronted him the next instant with her indignant countenance.

"Sir," said she, "do you atone in this way for the mercy of Heaven, which saved you from so many dangers? How dare you be guilty of this great wickedness? Where is Will Yarrel?"

"That is what I have come to ask," answered he, his eyes burning as angrily as her own.

"Do you deny that your false message enticed him away from this place? You may as well drop your mask now. I know you thoroughly—who you are, and how you have pretended ignorance of poor Will's identity," returned Jane.

His thin lip curled with a savage smile.

"You are right. It is idle to wear a mask now. Young

woman, I have no particular enmity to you, if you leave alone meddling with what does not concern you. It was a very romantic plan, that of yours, and your master, Will Yarrel; but I happen to have an older claim, and I warn you I shall enforce it. Leave that foolish child alone, and go your own way, if you know what is best, madam."

"I will not. If I can only find Will again, I will do my best to be a friend and protector. I will appeal to the law. What right have you to persecute her so?" was Jane's indignant response.

"You will find that the law recognizes a guardian's claim. I can bring the law upon *you* if you hinder my taking her in charge. I am legally appointed her guardian. I am her uncle besides, and it is to me that she owes her livelihood; for the pittance left to her melted away long ago," continued he coldly. "And now I say let her come out of her hiding-place, and put away her masquerading boy's garments, and be contented with the worthy lot which lies before her. Where is she?"

"Do you think to impose upon me so? You know that you have enticed poor Will away from me. You carried the dear child away in that coach. Why do you ask me to find her?" was Jane's warm retort.

Mathew Merle searched over the frank, honest face, and muttered, under his breath:

"By heaven, the girl is cunning beyond my thought! She has not come back at all."

"What do you mean?" demanded Jane, breathlessly.

"The foolish simpleton opened the coach door somehow, jumped into the street, and ran into the crowd. I kept in sight two or three squares, and then all at once she disappeared mysteriously. I was sure she would come back to you."

And again he looked suspiciously into Jane's face.

But her look of delighted surprise showed him plainly he had given her the first news of the escape.

"She may find her way to you yet," he added, cunningly. "It will be a good plan for me to keep my eye on you."

Jane coolly looked over to the time-table.

"I can take the next train," said she. "My own business will not delay."

And to herself she said, exultantly:

"That kind young gentleman has helped me. It is fortunate he gave me an address. I will write a line, and get some one to post it, telling him where to send to me, and warning him that it is best for us to keep apart a little while."

Mathew Merle hung around until the train came, and watched her into her carriage, even waited until it whirled away, and then went sullenly and angrily back to town, to hear the report from the police set upon Will Yarrell's track, which, however, was meager enough. They had been looking over such places as the escaped lad would be likely to seek, and had found nothing.

He asked, himself, cautiously, concerning all arrivals at the hotel where Captain Warner and his wife had taken rooms, and hung around until the captain came up from looking after the ship. But the careless cordiality of the latter's manner showed him he had no knowledge either of his passengers' relation to each other, or of the escape of Will from his uncle's pursuit. And he was once again thrown back upon his chagrin and disappointment.

"At all events, there is another wire to pull," he muttered, as he sat in the little room allotted to him by the landlord, and took up the bundle in the red silk handkerchief, which he had lugged around with him wherever he went. He unfastened the knots slowly, and took out a little bundle tied again in a handkerchief; a small package, what seemed a collection of yellow, time-stained letters, a miniature, and

a book bound in red morocco, covered with a gold clasp. When he opened the latter, it showed, instead of printed matter, lines of close, fine writing, with dates above the paragraphs.

It was Doctor Morley's diary.

Mathew Merle chuckled as his hard fingers toyed with the fluttering leaves.

"It was an odd thing this should fall into my hands. It is worth a snug little income, if I do not mistake. But it will not make up the loss of the other. No, nothing but the other will make a fine gentleman of my George, and a gentleman he shall be! I will hunt down that ungrateful minx! She shall marry him; she shall marry my George!"

The man's face changed wonderfully as he repeated the name of his only son; so that one who had only seen its hard, fierce expression, or its low look of subtle cunning, could hardly have believed it the same countenance.

The sharp, bright eyes seemed to dilate and overspread with a softening haze, the cruel lines of the mouth unwrinkled as by a magic power, and the warmth of the smile actually gave the whole face the very expression of tenderness which had hitherto seemed as foreign as the tropic glow of sunshine to the ice-bound poles.

"My boy—my own boy! He's a boy any man would be proud of!" murmured Mathew Merle. "I'm doing all this for George. Not but he's smart enough to make a way for himself; but I mean he shall have more than money. He shall go as a gentleman in places where his father was only a servant. Ha! ha! we'll see—we'll see!"

He read a moment or two, and the old sneer came back.

"These grand people are no better than the common folks, after all. Couldn't I make a sensation now in London by telling what I know? I am going to look at this Lady Mary Falkner. I will honor you by a call, my lady, you may be sure of that. But I must find the girl first,"

he added, glowering discontentedly around him. "It is passing strange how I have been interrupted, and what new affairs have pressed upon me. To think of that accursed voyage! I have to find out the coward who sent me upon it, and to pay him off in heavier measure than he anticipates. And I must hurry up to London to find what has been done with my letters all this time; for George has written; I know he has written. Perhaps he is ready to leave India, the affairs all settled. He may be on his way now. Oh, how I long to see the dear fellow! and to see him in the place he deserves! By this time he must have received my letter from Cape Town. I want his answer—how I want it!—and that girl! Then I think I could be contented to die."

He was interrupted by a knock at the door, and going to it, found one of the waiters there, and behind him a young gentleman.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," said the waiter, and was spared further explanation by the prompt coming forward of his companion.

"Good-day, Mr. Mathew Merle," said Maurice Middleton, quietly, although his pulse was leaping far beyond its usual steadiness. "I have a little business with you."

The old man did not recognize him.

"Come in, sir," he said, with a little show of courtesy. "You come from the police office with news, perhaps?"

He set out a chair, and closed the door upon the waiter.

Maurice sat down, with a rising glow of exultation in his heart.

The missing witness was found at last!

"No," said he, when Mathew Merle had settled himself into the chair on the other side of the table. "I do not come just now from the police office, although I have carried a warrant in my pocket this long time for your arrest, and have been searching for you everywhere."

"A warrant for my arrest!" repeated the man, indignantly. "What does that mean? What is your ground of complaint?"

"Contempt of the rules of her majesty's court of justice. You were summoned as a witness in the case of Middleton vs. Wainwright, and you failed to appear," replied Maurice, still in the coolest possible tone.

Mathew Merle leaped up from his chair, his sallow face flushed to purple, his eyes showing a red glow through their blackness.

"So, so! I think somebody else might be brought to the law on that account," he snarled fiercely. "Whose fault was it, I pray you? Whose cursed plot took me away from England, and sent me, at the peril of my life, on a voyage which ended in shipwreck? Contempt of court, indeed!"

"Do you mean to say you could not help your absence?"

"Who are *you*, anyway, and what authority have you to meddle with the business? I seem to remember something about your face, and yet I cannot place it."

"I am one of the Middletons," replied Maurice, unable to repress a growing uneasiness.

Again the fiery sparks played over those strange eyes.

"One of the Middletons? Curse the name! But, no—you are not the tall, thin-faced, gray-eyed man I suspect to be the cause of my sudden leave."

"You mean Felix!" said Maurice, hastily. "I saw you once or twice with my father."

"Felix! Felix! Yes, that was the name. Curse him! *He* is the man in the long cloak. Contempt of court, indeed!" vociferated Mathew Merle, in an incoherent fashion.

"I do not understand your talk in the least. Possibly you are not to blame, but your absence left the Middletons in a very uncomfortable position. The opposing lawyer ventured to assert that we had a hand in your absence, be-

cause you had some injurious testimony which might have been elicited by cross-questioning."

Mathew Merle looked up into the speaker's face with a sardonic smile.

"It does look that, certainly. And that chap, that Felix, was a shrewd one."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Maurice, angrily.

"I mean that I was drugged, and put on board a South American ship just as she was casting off the tug-boat, and my passage was paid by a man in a long cloak and slouched cap, and the man had gray eyes, and a hatchet face; and this Felix is such a man."

Maurice sat with his forehead on his hand, thinking back with all his power.

Felix had warned him to leave the search alone. Felix had known about the presence of Mathew Merle on board the Lively Jane. Felix had bungled in his management of the case, and that witness whose testimony had been worthless had been of his getting up. It came upon him with startling conviction, and he did not say a word, but in his heart he echoed Mathew Merle's exclamation:

"Felix is the man who sent off your witness! If you have any warrant to serve, take it to him!"

The keen, black eyes were watching his face sharply.

"Well, sir," said Mathew Merle, sneeringly, "what is your opinion of the case?"

"I am exceedingly puzzled. I only know that all this is news to me. Will you be good enough to tell me over the circumstances? Even if it was a plot, it seems to me it was a very stupid one, for one might be sure you would find your way back."

"If I bore the wear and tear of the voyage. I have guessed sometimes that there were hopes it would make an end of an old fellow like me. But it was reckoning without due knowledge," he added, with a chuckle.

"It is not much can be told. I, strangely enough, have no power to recall my last consciousness; but, as near as I can make it out, I went with a fellow who pretended to have been an old mate of mine in India, into a drinking saloon. Anyhow, the first I knew I was on the Lively Jane, well out to sea. The captain would only say that a man in a long cloak, and cap, with long whiskers——"

"Felix has no whiskers!" exclaimed Maurice, in a tone of relief.

"No; but it is mighty easy to step into a masquerade shop and get a pair," was the dry response.

"But what good could it be?" was the perplexed question of Maurice.

"Well, that is a question now. I've had plenty of time on the ocean o' nights to think it over; and I've made it out that he got me to state what he wanted before some witness—mind you, what he wanted, and no more—and then he wanted me out of the way."

"But *why* did he want you away? Do you not really know that we have a better claim to that property than the present possessor?"

"I do; that's certain, and it can't be rubbed out. You've a better right than General Wainwright, for your father is the legal heir of Gustavus Wainwright."

Maurice looked up eagerly, but a shade of dissatisfaction dropped upon his face.

That sphinx countenance of Mathew Merle hid some further knowledge behind; and yet what could it be? The young man racked his brain to imagine, and all in vain, and then he asked, coldly:

"Do I understand that you are willing to give your testimony to this effect, that our claim is correct and right?"

"Yes, I am willing, but you had best give Mr. Felix to

understand that I am on the lookout for tamperings, and have a score to settle yet with him."

"When and where can my father have a meeting with you? Shall you remain here?"

"I can't say for certain, because I have a little business to look after. If it is settled, as I hope, before to-morrow, I shall go up to London at once."

Maurice guessed very well the nature of that business, although the object of his fierce pursuit of the disguised lad was more than he could fathom.

"I suppose," said he, "I must be content with your promise to be in readiness to testify, although I confess I came here determined to compel you to accompany me to a lawyer's and give the required information under oath."

He smiled angrily, and then burst into a laugh.

"I am ready for you any time, but I prefer to treat with Mr. Felix. There is no danger of my failing you, nor of my disappearance this time."

"Then the suit will be brought up again," said Maurice, writing on his card.

"There is an address which will always find my father. Good-night, sir."

Mathew Merle bowed him out, and then came back and stood at the table rubbing his hands gleefully, as he said:

"Much good will my testimony do for them!"

CHAPTER XX.

"THERE IS MATHEW MERLE!"

Mr. Grey met Maurice Middleton at the hall door, when the latter returned that evening from his visit to Mathew Merle. Her husband's arrival, and a calmer conversation

with Will Yarrel, had in a measure subdued Mrs. Grey's virtuous indignation. But she was one of those narrow-minded devotees to the outward forms of propriety to whom any deviation is a positive crime. Her husband's persuasion had obtained her consent to poor Will's presence in the house until the morning train for London, but she showed, by her cold and forbidding manner, what she called a righteous rebuke for the whole proceeding. Mr. Grey, on the contrary, was warmly interested.

He met Maurice, as I have said, at the hall door, and seized him at once by the arm and drew him into the little anteroom, whispering softly, as if afraid a corps of detectives were at his heels:

"Look here, Middleton, things are growing warm. A policeman has been here this evening, inquiring if any one has seen a boy of this description. He says a woman in one of the upper stories saw a man carrying such a lad running down our lane. The apothecary likewise confirms the story, though, by good luck, he got your complexion wrong. He wanted to know what family I had, and I told him there was no one but my own, except some visitors, a Mr. and Mrs. Middleton. When I said that Mr. Middleton arrived in Liverpool several days ago, his curiosity concerning you ended. But they'll be here again, and I dare say are on the watch now. You'll never get that boy away without their knowing it. And Mrs. Grey is in a perfect panic lest he be taken here. Now I'll tell you what you must do. She must take to her proper clothing, and you must have a coach here, and go off boldly as Mr. and Mrs. Middleton."

"But what will she think? And how can you tell her? I haven't allowed her to suspect I have seen through her disguise."

"It is no time for scruples of delicacy. I'll tell her so myself, if you say so. But you are the right one to do it."

"Wouldn't Mrs. Grey——" began Maurice, doubtfully.

“If you have any consideration for the girl’s feelings you won’t set Ellen to tell her. Good heavens, man! these women are so hard on each other! Tell her yourself. She’ll take it best from you, and you’ll find a way to do it gently. Ellen will give her the necessary clothing.”

“If only I had found that Jane!” said Maurice, impatiently.

“Ellen declares it is all an imposture; that you will find yourself in some disgraceful, if not positively criminal affair. She says she knew you wouldn’t find any Jane.”

“I would as soon doubt the worth of my own mother or sister, were they alive,” cried Maurice, valiantly, “as doubt that sweet, innocent face. Yes, I will tell her myself.”

And he put his hat on the rack, and walked up stairs resolutely.

The still drooping figure was there in the easy-chair, just as he had left it, but he marked the deepened wistfulness of the eyes and the quivering of the lips, as she lifted her head to greet him.

“Oh, sir, have you found Jane? And can we go away soon?”

“I am afraid it is scarcely prudent to leave until morning. There is more of a search than I imagined. This Mathew Merle is in deadly earnest, certainly. I have seen him myself to-night.”

“You have seen him!—seen Mathew Merle! Oh, sir, you will not give me up to him?”

“Indeed, I will not!” answered Maurice, his own eyes misting over from the woeful glance of those brown orbs. “But I am at an utter loss to understand why you may not boldly face him, and refuse to go with him; and why——” He paused, and bent down over a little vase of flowers on the table. “And why,” he added, in a voice which faltered, despite his efforts, “you have been compelled to take refuge

in a disguise which I am sure is obnoxious and distasteful to you."

He did not raise his face from the flowers, nor glance toward the easy-chair. If he had, he would have seen the swift-coming blushes dispersed by a gentle dignity of manner, as new as becoming.

"You are right," said Will Yarrel; "one who has been so kind to me, who is risking so much to help me, ought to know the circumstances of my history. Jane knew it all, and I am certain Jane would approve my telling you. It is a very sad story, and as strange as those you read in romances. I suppose I was born in India, but I do not know more than Mathew Merle tells me. He says he is my uncle, but I do not believe it; my whole nature cries out against the belief, and besides, if it was so would he be so earnest to marry me to his son? Do cousins often marry here in England? It seems wrong and unnatural to me, but it is not for that I most earnestly rebel. It is because George Merle, from my earliest childhood, has been the ogre and terror of my life. I was brought up, you understand, in Mathew Merle's home. He has really a guardian's power, and within this last year he has used it in the most tyrannical fashion. That was the head and front of my offending—that I utterly refused and protested every time it was proposed—against a marriage with George Merle. You do not know him, of course—he is in India now, I suppose—but if you did, if you were on friendly terms, what is commonly called well acquainted, you would never see, as I do, what a low, cruel, brutal nature is his. His father does not see it; he is so wily and cunning that even while he is cheating and deceiving him, his father idolizes him. But in his very boyhood he vented upon me all the low spite and brutal tyranny of his nature. Oh! how many times I have vented my childish suffering in wild appeals for Heaven to take me away where my unknown parents had gone! Now

I have flamed at him in fierce but unavailing indignation—now I have trembled and shivered only at the sound of his coming step! All that I could fear, and dread, and loathe, George Merle has taught me. He made my child-life so miserable and forlorn that, all unknowing of the great secrets of death, I prayed my poor little heart out beseeching Heaven to let me die. He went away to a great school when I was fourteen, and from that time to this every year I had peace and quiet, and learned to find a little joy in life. And now, Mathew Merle of a sudden tells me I am to marry George, and be rich, and happy, and honored. If he thrust me upon the brink of a bottomless pit, I should not shrink back in such horror. Marry George Merle I would not, if I had only the alternative of thrusting a dagger into my own breast. I said so passionately and defiantly, and then Mathew Merle, who had hitherto left me pretty much alone, became this pitiless, tyrannical ruler from whom I have tried to escape. He took me all of a sudden, without a single word of explanation, from our quiet home in Bombay, and brought me to England. I made no objection, but rather rejoiced in the change, especially when I found that George was to remain behind. But I soon found it was but a change of persecutions. Oh, sir, what can be the reason they are so set upon my misery? It is not love for me. It would be the bitterest of mockery for them to pretend that George Merle wishes to marry me because he loves me. What is it then?

“I have tortured my brain almost to frenzy trying to solve the mystery. When I came to England I had high hopes. I can hardly tell you how wild they were, but I meant to discover for myself my birth, my true home. I had two things to help me—a locket and my mother’s Bible, which one of Mathew Merle’s servants gave me on her death-bed, and told me to hide from her master. With these for my magic keys, I meant to unlock some proud and beautiful

secret. Woe is me! When the power is in an unprincipled person's hand, how helpless his victim can be! I can do nothing."

She paused a moment to turn the melancholy brown eyes imploringly upon his.

"My poor child! you shall have some one now to espouse your cause!" cried Maurice, hotly. "I will defy this Mathew Merle, and save you."

A mournful smile trembled through her tears.

"Ah, you are so noble and good! But I am worn to spiritlessness. Poor Jane was to be my staff and stay, and now she has vanished. Will not something take you away also?"

"No," cried Maurice, all the chivalry of his noble nature flaming up within his heart. "I will devote myself to your service. But tell me all, and when I know the whole, I can judge if the plan I have formed will answer."

"I might make it a long story, but it will sicken you, and it pains me. It is enough to say he took me where he could work his will without fear of hindrance. He kept me a close prisoner locked in his room. I think he pretended to the landlady that I was not of sound mind. I do not know why he brought me to England, unless to make sure in some way the identity of some claim to which I am positive my birth entitles me. But he persecuted me day after day to obtain my consent to a marriage with George. He tried coaxing and bribing first; told me that his son had come into a great fortune, and could only be happy in taking me for his wife. I laughed the absurd statement to scorn. Then he was angry, and tried to grind down my spirit with persecutions and privations. Heaven only knows why I was not driven to madness. But I know that I shudder now to recall my mental agony. I had determined to use every means to escape from him, and twice nearly succeeded. But that woman who kept the house, of whom I was almost as

much afraid as of Mathew Merle, detected me, and cut off my only hope. One day a singular looking person passed through the corridor, which was a sort of promenade for the boarders. My room had a little glass pane in the top of the door, and from my dreary perch in the high-barred windows I could look through. I noticed him, the first time he came, in a listless fashion; but next my attention was drawn by seeing the landlady point me out, and allow him to look at me through the glass door. A strange impulse made me burst forth in a wild appeal for help. I said I was dying by inches, growing mad with misery. I declared a lonely desert, a trackless ocean, was preferable to the life I led.

“The stranger listened attentively, and it almost seemed to me the landlady’s hard heart was melted; for, after the man in the long coat and the bushy whiskers had left, she came to my room and sat down and talked with me. She asked me what I had done to anger my uncle. I told her nothing, except that I would not marry his son. She said she was sorry for me, but she was a poor woman, and could not help me. It struck me as odd that when she said it she put her hand in her pocket, and I heard the chinking of coin. I tried my best to conciliate her, hoping to escape through her help; and, though I did not care for it, I drank a cup of coffee she brought me just after Mathew Merle had paid me his usual afternoon visit.

“Oh, sir, you will believe me, will you not, when I tell you that I knew nothing more from that moment until I woke, far out to sea, on board the ship *Sea Foam*. I was there, dressed in these clothes, with gold in my pocket, and a trunk filled with boy’s clothing, but not a vestige of my old life left me except my Bible, and that had been mutilated, for the blank pages and every scrap of writing had been cut out. Even the precious locket I had secretly worn around my neck was gone. This letter was in my pocket.

Read it, sir, and try to have pity, and imagine what must have been my feelings awaking there to such circumstances, the only woman on board a ship's crew and officers—every soul an utter stranger.”

She drew forth a small pocket-book, took out the mysterious letter she had so carefully preserved, and put it in his hand.

Maurice read it with intense interest, and looked over to her with pitying sympathy.

“Now,” said she, “you will not blame me that I accepted the disguise thrust upon me. Was it not, indeed, the wisest course? At all events, I kept my secret from them. The captain was a generous, warm-hearted man, and he was kind as a father; but I guarded my secret. I accepted the mysterious author of the letter for my friend. I knew enough of life to guess how hard and bitter a defenseless girl would find a struggle for livelihood.

“I think I won the friendliness of all on board, but left the ship, and chose to remain alone for weeks on a lonely island, because in the still most mysterious manner, Mathew Merle, whom I met in London, appeared and asked to take passage with the captain. Think of it, sir, on that island I learned that the poor, conscience-stricken shipmaster had been paid heavily to leave me upon the deserted island. My unknown friend became also an enemy.

“Oh, what have I done—what am I—whose foe, or heir? that I am so strangely persecuted? I, a lonely, friendless creature.”

“No longer friendless,” cried out Maurice. “I will gladly give my whole life to your service.”

Those brilliant eyes of his spoke a language of their own beyond his words.

Wilhelmine blushed softly, and then sighed.

“But you must hear the rest. How the Royal Bess came to the island for my relief, and Mathew Merle again

confronted me. He pretended ignorance. For a little time I fancied in my boy's disguise I was safe. But when we landed I met a glance from that basilisk eye of his, which assured me that I was known, and watched. The rest you know."

"It is a strange, astonishing history," said Maurice, after a moment's deep reflection.

"But there is one missing link I can supply. Mathew Merle himself was drugged, and put on board another ship. Your mysterious letter writer, I think, took care of you both. And yet, what could be the object? It seems likely, indeed, that you have a rightful claim to some fortune, or why should these Merles care for you so long and yet persecute you so shamefully? I will give the matter close reflection when I have time.

"Now then for my plan. It will be less likely to displease you, after this explanation. We have decided that it would be impossible to smuggle any boy to the London train without the police interfering. But they will not question the right of the departure of Mr. Grey's guests. You will not be angry if I tell you that you must pass for a little time as my wife. Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Middleton will take a coach boldly to-morrow morning. I gave your friend Jane my address. We shall probably hear from her to-morrow, and as soon as they abandon the search, you may resume, if you choose, your original journey."

"You are so kind—you are so good," faltered the girl—"how can I ever repay you?"

Mr. Maurice Middleton did not speak the thought which came to him, and sent a thrill of pleasure through his heart.

"And now," said he, "I may tell Mrs. Grey to make ready Mrs. Middleton's clothing!"

She blushed, and smiled, and arched her head a little

haughtily, as she drew out some gold and handed it to him.

"You will pay her. I—I do not wish to owe anything to the lady, for she has hardly been as kind and forbearing as one happy and prosperous woman should be toward a less fortunate sister."

"I understand you. And I resent the unkindness more indignantly than you can do. But remember how some natures are so shallow and narrow, they make more noise and stir in flowing over a few pebbles than a broad majestic river does in sweeping grandly to the ocean."

"I am ashamed of my poor resentment, when I, a stranger, am receiving such generous and disinterested kindness," she said the next moment in self-reproach, and went with him smiling more hopefully.

Mrs. Grey, after his brief explanation, was more gracious likewise, and the pair went off to her chamber, from which came now and then the gay prattle of voices, with occasional bursts of girlish laughter.

In a short time they re-appeared. If Will Yarrel had been strikingly handsome and interesting looking, what could Maurice think of this fair young girl who came gliding behind Mrs. Grey, her cheeks glowing with blushes, her eyes shining with joyful hope?

"Who would recognize her?" exclaimed Mr. Grey. "Why, she has added three years to her looks, and lost nothing by it either," he added.

"But I tell her we must contrive to cover up those short, kinky boy's curls with false braids. The police have such terrible eyes for trifles. Thomas must go out for some; and when she has on a hat and veil, I think we may defy them," said his wife, having by this time nearly overcome her scruples.

The next morning early the coach that had been ordered for Mr. Grey's visitors made its appearance. Two police-

men were lounging along the sidewalk, and policemen have a way of taking notes of passing events without seeming to use their eyes at all. Mr. and Mrs. Middleton, however, seemed to have no concern about the matter. The Greys came down the steps for the last words of leave-taking. There were warm adieus, and many promises of a reciprocated visit. The trunk was strapped behind, and away rolled the coach.

"A pretty woman!" said one policeman to the other.

"It's all right," returned his confederate. "They were there before our bird arrived in Liverpool."

"Safe so far, Miss Wilhelmine!" said Maurice, gayly. "I think you might almost venture to throw up your vail."

"Not yet," she answered, catching her breath nervously. "It seems to me as if every stone in the pavement was ready to cry out and betray me."

"You have not been under my care before; I do not allow failure or betrayal."

The coach drove briskly up to the great station. There was an extra force of police around. Maurice perceived it at a glance, but would not disturb his companion by any allusion to it.

The door was opened, and the coachman came to help them out. Maurice gathered up the shawl, and book, and luncheon basket, pretty trifles to give further proof of their journey's genuineness, and gave the lady his arm, walking on carelessly toward the office. He felt her fingers close suddenly upon his arm, and knew what it meant without her whisper:

"Oh, sir, there is Mathew Merle!"

CHAPTER XXI.

‘COME TO A BETTER REFUGE.’

Lady Mary's sudden illness made less stir in the gay circle gathered at Chichester Rookery than that of any other member could have done. She had mingled so little with them, had been so still and quiet upon her brief visits to the drawing-room, that she was scarcely missed. She did not withdraw any one else either, as would have been the case had it been General Wainwright. She herself voluntarily shortened Lord Ronald's visits to her sick-room.

She was nervously anxious, indeed, that there should be no interruption of the festivities, and no shadow cast upon their gayety. She was not very ill, she said to the countess, with a wistful smile, only a little worn out and debilitated. The doctor corroborated the statement, but the earl always came away with a grave face from her chamber. Perhaps he alone saw the mask removed, and knew all that she was suffering. She had been too ill, immediately after, for any one to question her concerning the unknown visitor whose call had so excited the idle curiosity of the guests; and the earl himself had settled the matter by telling them the woman came with a message from an old friend in India, but that her ladyship had been taken ill too soon to hear out her communication. No one, therefore, thought of connecting the two events.

The earl had somehow lost a little of his own cheerfulness and serenity, and if any one had noticed him particularly they would have discovered his nervous watch of all arrivals.

He came out from his room when the mail arrived, and contrary to his usual habit, opened the bag himself, and

with his own hands sorted over the letters, a task which from time immemorial had devolved upon the butler. He moreover playfully forestalled Lord Ronald, and carried Lady Mary's correspondence to its owner, and under her eye opened and read the letters.

The letter for which they had both secretly looked, and which they had mutually dreaded, without allowing the other to suspect it, came one morning about ten days after the visit of Jane West.

The earl brought it in with one or two others on business matters, and silently handed them for her to examine the handwriting of the address.

Lady Mary was bolstered up in the easy-chair. She sorted them over listlessly, and laid them on her lap.

"This one is from Thompson, the agent, and this from Pryor, the housekeeper, and this from Cosse & Blackwells, and this——"

She paused, looked long and earnestly at the coarse, rather feeble looking chirography, and said, in a troubled voice:

"I do not know that writing at all."

The earl stretched out his hand to take it.

"Let me read it for you, Mary."

But her thin, white fingers held it firmly, and in a moment more she broke the seal.

A low cry broke over the pale lips, but she checked it, and glanced apprehensively around to see if her maid or the nurse were present. They had, however, both retired on the earl's appearance.

She went back, and read it over carefully, then held it out to him, moaning:

"Oh, I would that I were dead! There is another, still another in possession of that fatal secret. Oh, Philip, Philip, the way of the transgressor is hard!"

"Hush, Mary!" exclaimed the earl.

But his own hand trembled over the letter, and his brow grew dark and stern.

“Well,” said he, presently, “the fellow must be looked after. It is a shameful thing in Doctor Morley that he did not destroy those papers. There will be no end, if once we begin to bribe or silence such a one as wrote that letter. I have half a mind to defy him. After all the whole affair is dead. There could be no great harm come from the exposure.”

Lady Mary clasped her hands with a wild upward glance.

“No harm? Oh, Philip, think of the disgrace!”

The earl knit his forehead savagely.

“Who would take this vagabond’s word against that of the Earl of Chichester? How has he obtained the papers? You say the woman declared they had been stolen. Is a thief to blacken the name of a peer of England?”

Lady Mary caught her breath gaspingly. She said only two words, but the sorrowful, reproachful eyes held an accusation which her brother read intelligently.

“Oh, Philip!”

He flushed even to his forehead, and stammered:

“I know I have no right, remembering my follies, to condemn wrong in others. Perhaps you will say,” he added, bitterly, “I am but a mate for such, since my noble birth did not hinder my sharing their wrong-doing. I don’t wonder you are shocked. My poor Mary! when I remember what suffering it has brought upon you, I wonder you do not fill my ears with incessant and angry reproaches. You, who are innocent, seem to have borne the most anguish, the most punishment.”

“Innocent!” faltered Lady Mary’s shivering lips, and then she turned her face to the pillow, and closed her eyes.

“At all events,” said the earl, regaining his composure, “this fellow must be granted the interview he desires. It may be a salutary thing for him to discover that he will not

hold his bargain with a sick woman, but must deal with the Earl of Chichester himself. You empower me to act for you?"

She was silent a moment.

"Of course you must. Is not the affair mine rather than yours, except for your unfortunate attachment to Morley?" he repeated, a little impatiently.

"I should like to see the man myself, Philip, if I am able, but I will give him to understand that you are to settle the affair."

"It is suicidal for you to submit yourself to so much excitement, Mary."

"Do you think it is any easier to stay in this room, and know that you are with him?" she added, mournfully.

"We must get those papers, Philip, let their price be what they may, and I ask it as my right that you give them to me before you examine them yourself."

"They must be promptly burnt; I will have no more dallying. Then I understand I am to allow this Mathew Merle to come here, on the day and hour he has set?"

"Yes. If I am able, I shall receive him. I shall mention to Ronald that I expect such a person on business, and there will be no comment. When is the hour?"

"At four, the day after to-morrow. Take my advice, Mary, and spare yourself such a trying interview. I admit that it disturbs me to think of it—you, Lady Mary Falkner, lowering yourself to parley with this low-born wretch."

A bitter, bitter smile crossed Lady Mary's white face.

"Alack, Philip, my self-love can receive no wound from such a source, nor my pride be in any way lowered. Perhaps because it already lies so low, so low," she repeated, drearily.

He looked at her a moment gloomily, almost indignantly; but a tender compassion stole over him as she closed her eyes wearily. How white and wan it was, how full of lines

left there by keenest suffering, the face he could still recall so fair, and bright, and gay, in its girlish bloom!

Struck dumb with the consciousness of his own share in the change, he only kissed her, and left her without another word.

The earl had prepared an excursion to take away from the house the majority of his guests, on the afternoon the unwelcome visitor was expected, but a lowering sky, with occasional showers of rain, disturbed his calculations. And they were unusually dull and listless from the disappointment, and, with *ennuied* faces, were distributed at the windows, watching for a sign of fair weather, when the carriage brought Mathew Merle to the entrance step. Now, strangers arriving and departing from Chichester Rookery was too common to attract attention. It had only been the fact of her coming unattended in a post-chaise that had drawn the observation of the noble company upon Jane West.

Mathew Merle, then, for all his singular looks, excited no comment. Only Octavia Wainwright, sitting near the window, playing chess with Lord Ronald, uttered a little exclamation of astonishment, and cast a second inquiring glance at the window.

Felix was in the room at the time, drawing a plan for the countess of a new summer-house. Whatever else might occupy him, he never lost a look or gesture of Miss Wainwright's.

He laid down his pencil and walked straight to the window, reaching it just in time to recognize the missing witness as he stepped under the portal.

Miss Wainwright had made a false move and was jesting over it, but she found time to look up questioningly as Felix returned. Their eyes met, and there was a little confusion on both sides. She finished her game with Lord Ronald, however, and Felix returned to his drawing. The post-chaise still waited at the door.

As the pearl-inlaid chess table was wheeled away, Octavia rose, carelessly shook out her lawn flounces, and sauntered across the room, stopping, as if by accident, at the table where the summer-house plan was being warmly discussed by the countess and one of her guests, Miss Nettie Hatherway, an East Indian heiress, who was quite willing to commence a flirtation with the grave, unimpressible, but remarkably interesting Mr. Thorne.

Miss Wainwright had not failed to notice the young lady's kindly interest in the work of Felix Thorne. It is possible she took a wicked pleasure in seeing that quick sparkle come into his eye and the spot of crimson gather on the sallow cheek when she approached. She leaned over the table a moment, and followed with her white finger the lines on the plan.

"Very good, Mr. Thorne," said she; "do you know I detect a blunder, and I am wondering how you will repair it?"

He recognized the hidden meaning and answered quickly:

"If there is a blunder it can be remedied by prompt action, Miss Wainwright."

She seemed to be examining the plan with keen interest.

"I should like to know how you will commence," she said, slowly, putting her finger again on one of the foundation lines. "What will you do here, to make the upper structure secure?"

"Lay a straight plank, Miss Wainwright."

"But the danger—the lack of security," she said, meaningly.

A singular smile came to his thin lips. He compelled her to look at him by a magnetic glance of power.

"I shall not be afraid of danger. I will work simply and fearlessly, let what will come."

She lowered her white eyelids slowly, a little shiver shot

through her stately figure, and without a word she turned away.

She took a seat in the window nearest the steps, and sat there after Felix had left the room. She saw him take up his position by the post-chaise, and knew what he was waiting for. A growing fear and weary pain was in her heart, but she kept up a playful conversation with Lord Ronald, who drifted to her side almost as inevitably as the magnetic needle to the pole.

She knew when Mathew Merle came out. She saw his glum face suddenly flush over with fierce anger, and noted the steady determination with which Felix confronted him.

"Oh, what would I give to hear what they are saying?" thought she, feverishly, and yet responded with a careless smile to Lord Ronald's jest.

There were but a few words spoken there, but Felix took a card from Mathew Merle, bowed stiffly, and came back into the house.

Octavia Wainwright found means that evening to steal into the library, where he sat poring over the earl's Australian papers.

He rose from his chair when he saw the grim set of the scarlet lip, the feverish gleaming of the singular eyes.

"Miss Wainwright!" he ejaculated in astonishment.

"Felix," said she, in a proud, hard voice, "what are you going to do?"

"Proceed at once to file in our petition for a new trial. You are aware that the missing witness has returned. The case of Middleton vs. Wainwright will come up again at the next court."

She was snapping angrily at a bracelet of strung pearl and tiny shells, which ornamented the fair, exquisitely shaped arm.

"Do you deny that you are ignorant of the mine you may spring?" she asked, hastily.

"I do not know, and I do not care," returned he, passionately; "if the edifice tumbles, it will fall on other heads as well."

"You are cruel and vindictive. You do not care for any gain of your own. You only wish to punish me. You sent this Mathew Merle away once; why have you brought him back? I warn you that he will not help you to one farthing's worth."

"He will prove the legitimacy of my father's claim. He will show to the world that the proud Wainwrights have usurped another's rightful claim."

She was standing still, looking down upon the carpet pensively.

"Cruel and pitiless," she murmured again.

"And is no one else cruel?" he burst forth, impetuously, "have you no mercy upon those who come in your path?"

She lifted those large eyes of hers dilated with a sudden terror.

"What do you mean?"

"Ask your own conscience, which you are smothering with the iron hand of your imperious pride. This Mathew Merle accused me of a two-fold stratagem. He says I concocted a strange plan to send a poor girl drifting helplessly upon the world. He says my disguise of a long cloak, and slouched cap, and bushy beard, has been shrewdly penetrated. Look you, Miss Wainwright, the thing of which he accuses me is utterly new to me. But I know something of such a cloak, and cap, and wig, and I guess who has been masquerading in them. I used them once myself, I make no denial of it. I smuggled them out of the old closet, and used them, but of such a girl, and the ship *Sea Foam*, and a Captain Leyard, I know nothing. Speak, Miss Wainwright. What does your conscience say to you, who accuse me of being cruel and merciless!"

The proud form was drooping, the lips trembled out of

their sternness, but she flung out her white hands in a defiant gesture

"I am not afraid of you, Felix. I do not care what you suspect or think."

"If I could only compel you to love me with one-half the passion which consumes me," he said, fiercely.

She smiled bitterly. How blind these men could be! How easily cajoled by a woman's art? But the moment after the poor exultation of such a thought died out. A dreamy haze crept into those resplendent eyes. The soft, tender curves came back to those scarlet lips.

"There are two natures in me, Felix," she said, slowly, "one that you love, and one that you despise. I wonder which will conquer?"

"Who can doubt," returned Felix, looking at her with a fierce blending of adoration and anger, "your pride and ambition, Miss Wainwright, sweep away all other considerations."

She sighed heavily, and then laughed.

"Well, if you are determined upon war, it is a consolation to know that I can step aside from the ruin into which you hope to involve me, as well as yourself. My pride and ambition can ask no richer tribute than lies waiting for a beckoning gesture of mine."

"I know your meaning. I am half persuaded you are right. Yet I do not forget that the Falkners and Chiches-
ters are proud and exacting also."

"Lord Ronald loves me," said Miss Wainwright, but there was no womanly conscious blush upon her cheeks.

"His love is like a mountain rill beside a Niagara, in comparison with mine," said Felix, fiercely.

She swept back the luxuriant ripples of fair hair from her broad white temples, and looked into his face wistfully.

"Octavia, you are right, you have a dual nature. It is the truest and best that is pleading with you. Your pride

and ambition may be gratified, but your heart will be starved," he cried, beseechingly. "Come to a better refuge."

He half opened his arms, and all the passion and strength of his powerful nature seemed to have passed into those glittering eyes of his.

She stood a moment trembling, once actually took a step toward him, and then suddenly she turned and fled.

Felix sank back into the chair, and dropped his head to the table with a bitter groan.

CHAPTER XXII.

"INSULT TO INJURY!"

Lady Mary Falkner's interview with Mathew Merle had been exceedingly agitating, and she had found the shrewd, crafty old man so exorbitant in his demands, that she had been obliged to give the signal upon the bell, which the earl stood impatient to answer.

His lordship came into the apartment wearing his sternest and haughtiest look. But Mathew Merle was not so easily daunted. He maintained his ground coolly, despite the angry threats of the great man, and would not abate one iota of his claim.

"You are an arrant rogue," said the earl, impatiently, "and your greediness will lose you the generous sum I am willing to give. Let the matter pass. Keep the papers. After all, what are they worth to me? The affair is past and buried. To be sure, to save the unpleasantness of a little scandal, I am willing to buy them, even of one who has obtained them by fraud, to save the reviving of a youthful indiscretion. I tell you, there can no harm come of them—nothing beyond a little scandal, and who will heed

that, when my life has so thoroughly established my present reputation? Take yourself and your papers away."

Mathew Merle had smiled grimly, as he turned toward the haggard face of the countess.

"Too high a price, is it? Ask her ladyship if it is more than it is worth to secure those papers in her own hand? Why, they are of that value to me, now."

"Her ladyship is easily frightened; you are to deal with me," was the earl's angry reply.

But Lady Mary stretched out her white hands imploringly.

"Let him come again with the papers, Philip; he says they are not here to-day."

"Of course they are not," sneered Mathew Merle, "am I a silly boy that I bring them on my person into your house, before the terms are made?"

The earl's haughty spirit chafed fiercely at the man's insolence of look and tone. He laid his hand on the bell to summon a servant to put the intruder out of the house, but a low, imploring cry from his sister checked him.

"Philip," said she, "listen to me in this matter."

"Yes," said Mathew Merle, coolly, "you will be wise to listen to Lady Falkner."

There was an emphasis on the name which made the noble lady wince.

"Appoint your own time and place—but let it be prompt," said she, with a gentle dignity, which touched even Mathew Merle. "The earl will see that the sum you require is ready for you."

"But, Mary," expostulated the earl.

"Hush! I am worn out. I can bear no more. Let him go now, with the understanding that the money will be paid him. It must be—Philip. Come back to me when you have settled where to meet him."

The earl, however unwilling, was fain to obey that woeful, authoritative look.

He saw Mathew Merle, with a sardonic smile of triumph, take his leave, and with a nameless terror in his heart came back to the pale woman in the easy-chair. The nurse had given her a cordial, and respectfully expostulated against further business transactions. Lady Mary only smiled mournfully, and sent her away.

The earl drew his chair to her bedside, and took in his the thin white hand, as he said:

“My poor Mary, what new trouble is this?”

“Ah, Philip, nothing new. It is the old, old wrong. The time has come when I can no longer hide it from you, the terrible secret which has poisoned all my life. Philip, you knew that it was through my persuasions that Arthur Morley stepped in between you and the consequences of your Oxford folly, but you did not know why I was able to induce so conscientious a person to take upon himself that overwhelming appearance of guilt. Bend your head close, and let me whisper what I dare not trust to be spoken aloud.”

She whispered a few words in his ear, and then buried her ashen face in her shaking hands.

“Great heavens! Mary, Mary, this cannot be,” he cried, in a voice of unutterable horror.

“It is Heaven’s truth,” she answered, hopelessly. “I loved him always. I had hopes that it would end favorably, and the terrible danger, and your distracted appeals, and the lack of any time for deliberation quite drove me frantic. Oh, I never meant to wrong him so terribly, or to become so guilty myself. But I was so miserably weak, and our father was so fierce, he had brought us up with such an iron rule. I dared not disobey when he bade me prepare for my marriage with Lord Falkner. Oh, the wretched, wretched life I led! the miserable subterfuges I

was compelled to adopt. The great terror which came upon me when I realized my position!"

She paused, shuddering from head to foot.

The earl was wiping away the clammy drops from his forehead.

"And he bore it patiently!" he said, at last.

A dreary smile made the haggard face more wretched still in its appearance.

"I had no fear of him—never, any of the time. Oh, I knew however deeply I stabbed his honor, and happiness, and honest name, he would still bear with me. I wrote him a mild appeal to his love and compassion; I showed him the strait into which pitiless circumstances had driven me, and I think he always pitied me. He sent me back but a single line, that if I could obtain Heaven's forgiveness, I need not fear his resentment. And you know he went away to Australia."

"Good Heaven! good Heaven!" repeated the earl, almost incoherently. "No wonder you reverence the man's memory!"

"He was a martyr! He is a saint now!" said Lady Mary, in a low voice.

"But I have had my punishment even from him. When Lord Falkner died, I wrote to him—you may guess what reparation I offered—and my letter was returned to me, re-directed, and but this single line in his handwriting, 'Insult to injury!' Oh, the words have burned in to my brain! His love had turned, you see, to loathing, and mine——"

She spoke the words slowly, with an effort that seemed to require her whole strength.

"And mine had strengthened and grown with every added year, until now it is something akin to the adoration of a devotee, and now I am going to meet him there above—he, the strong, and dauntless, and pure, and I, the weak,

and cowardly, and guilty woman who condemned him to such misery!"

The last words were hardly audible.

The earl's consternation was thoroughly pitiable. He paced the room with swift steps, his unnerved arms dropping helplessly by his side.

He paused once to put a glass of water to her white lips, and when she seemed a little revived, he said, hoarsely:

"Mary, it was my wickedness that brought upon you all this sorrow and trouble. I have hitherto called it the wild folly of a dissipated young man, but I see the sin now in its hideous proportions. I will not blame you. I cannot blame you, knowing so well how circumstances forced you into the unhappy position. Thank Heaven, Falkner is dead, and this Morley has gone too. Do you mean that this wretch who has left us can bring proofs of this ugly story?"

"He can. You see that no price is too exorbitant for us to pay. Doctor Morley, noble, generous soul! saved those papers, and left provision for them to be forwarded safely and securely to me. This man, it seems, somehow found out and stole the papers from that woman's charge. Philip, you must get them, at any price, for Ronald's sake."

"Holy saints! poor Ronald! he must never suspect this. You are right. I will have those papers, if I dog that man's steps and throttle him to get possession of them."

"You must give him the money. Take my jewels and sell them, if necessary."

"Trust me to use all possible dispatch and caution. I am to meet him again this week. Try to take rest now, my poor Mary, and dismiss your anxiety. You should have trusted this to me before."

"I was true to my nature—still cowardly," she said, mournfully. "I shall do my best to rest, for I am thor-

oughly worn out, and I want to have an earnest talk with Ronald to-night."

"Not to tell him this?" said the earl, hastily.

"No; oh, no. Do you think a mother's lips could ever tell him such a story? But to learn about Miss Wainwright. I am nervously anxious that he should be independent of any accident. With her dower, and my private fortune, he would be secure from poverty, let what might come. I shall urge his immediate proposal."

"She is a brilliant creature. I meant to have looked up that rumor; but of course there can be no foundation for it, or the general would not rest so secure and contented. It is a very fine property, and I know the Wainwrights of Surrey are a very old family. Now I must leave you. Pray let the nurse put you at once to sleep; and don't have Ronald here until you can show a less ghastly face."

"If the nurse could only bring the sleep!" sighed Lady Mary.

But when Lord Ronald came she was looking quite revived. The dressing-maid had brought a becoming wrapper, and had touched the worn cheeks with a tint of rouge, and as she held out her hand to him, with a tender smile, her eyes gleaming brightly, the son exclaimed, joyfully:

"My dear mamma, you are better to-day. It is so delightful to see a little color again in those dear, pale cheeks. You have had a comfortable day, I am sure."

Lady Mary kept her hold of his hand, smiling wistfully.

"I have been thinking a great deal about you and your prospects to-day. Ronald, dear, pull those cushions to my feet, and sit down as you used to when you came home from school and told over your adventures. What have you been doing to-day? Are you enjoying this visit to the Rookery?"

"Indeed I am," answered the handsome young fellow,

smiling archly at her penetrating glance, as he settled himself at her feet; "it is quite an improvement on the Scottish tour."

"And Miss Wainwright," asked Lady Mary, running her thin white fingers through the curly locks of the head laid against her knee.

The color deepened in his cheeks.

"I think she enjoys it also. It was splendid in my uncle to invite them here."

"Ronald, dear, is your mind quite settled?"

"About what, my wise mamma?"

"You know very well what I mean. Don't be shy, even of such secrets, with your mother, Ronald. Are you satisfied that you love her?"

"Indeed I am," was the prompt reply. "I shall always be proud of such a Lady Falkner. She is worthy, I think, to sit in your place, and that is the highest praise I can give her, precious mother."

Lady Mary was silent. Such bitter mockery his words seemed; but she must keep still that fair mask and hide how his words stabbed her.

"If you are sure of your own sentiments I think it honorable for you to speak them," she said, presently, after a thoughtful silence on either side.

"Do you think so?" returned he, eagerly. "I have been longing to make my hopes sure, but have been afraid of being precipitate."

"I think it both wise and proper. I am anxious myself to have it settled. My health is feeble; no one knows what may happen. I should like to give your wife a mother's blessing before I die."

"Oh, mother, don't dash my joyful hopes by introducing such a black shadow. You are improving. I told you I was sure you were looking better. But I will risk my fate to-night. We are going to see that wonderful midnight

“YOU ARE AN ARRANT ROGUE. TAKE YOUR PAPERS AWAY.”—(P. 208.)



plant, which the gardener says will bloom to-night. I will ask her then."

"And come to my chamber with the answer; I shall not be asleep. Stay, there is a ring in my casket. The rose diamond, you know; use that for the engagement-ring."

"Thank you, mamma. It is not too costly for my peerless Octavia, though I should not have dared to ask for it. Give me your good wishes again for good luck."

She kissed him fondly, and laid her hands on his head in mute blessing.

Lord Ronald went away wondering at the solemnity of the act.

That evening he led Octavia into the conservatory, which extended by terraces to the very gate-way of the park. Lady Chichester was very proud of her greenhouses, and had taken great pains to secure tasteful as well as competent gardeners. The conservatory was large enough for a ball-room, and arranged with due regard to its being a winter resort for the guests, with wide marble-flagged walks, and bamboo settees, and sparkling fountains, quite clear from the usual impression of crowding the plants so closely together as to hide half their beauty.

Lord Ronald had been shrewd enough to refrain from communicating the gardener's announcement to the rest of the guests, and he had a clear field before him as he entered upon the fairy scene with the beautiful Octavia upon his arm.

She uttered an exclamation of delight at the effect of the colored lights disposed around the central fountain, and they made a circuit of the building, glancing at all its wonders, and admiring, to the gray-haired gardener's content, its wealth of fragrance and loveliness, before they took seats before the star of the evening—the blossoms whose delicate petals were all aflutter with the first thrill of life.

The gardener stood by and gave them its history, speak-

ing as tenderly and proudly as if it were a human being over whose life he had watched so many years, to be rewarded this night by its grateful answer.

They listened to his garrulous, although respectful talk, in dreamy silence. The scene was so beautiful; the rich fragrance of the air was so subtle and yet powerful in its effect neither of them could return to their careless talk. Octavia sat with her lap full of blossoms, which Lord Ronald had mutely presented, her large and pensive eyes roaming slowly from one beauty to another. A smile of dreamy, languid pleasure just stirred the red lips from their gentle curve. Her white hands fell listlessly and yet half caressingly among the flowers, crushing out a tropic breath from the orange blossoms. Presently, when the gardener had discovered that his explanations fell upon ears which took none of their meaning, he beat a hasty retreat. She sighed softly.

“Why is that,” asked Lord Ronald, in a voice of tender reproach, “you sigh, Miss Wainwright.”

“From excessive delight perhaps,” answered she, “it is so beautiful here. Don’t you fancy lotus-eaters breathe just such sighs, even in their paradise?”

He smiled brightly. In such a scene, out of that mood it did not seem abrupt for him to take the great rose diamond in his hand, and, holding it out to her, say, simply:

“Miss Wainwright, I think you know very well how dearly I love you. Will you honor me so much as to give me the privilege of putting this ring upon your finger? I bring it with my mother’s blessing.”

Octavia Wainwright’s dreamy eyes brightened out of their haze. Pride and ambition obtained their fruition now. The coronet of the Falkners’ lay at her feet.

The white, gold fringed lids dropped slowly to the glow-

ing cheek, but she extended the lily hand, and smiled graciously.

“You honor me too generously, Lord Ronald; that gem is fit for the betrothal of a princess.”

“It is none too rich or rare for you, my peerless Octavia,” exclaimed the enraptured young nobleman.

And the rose diamond glistened on Octavia's finger. Strange to say, at that moment the radiance and beauty around her blurred over with a gloomy cloud. A cold shudder stole from her fettered finger, and stabbed a stinging blow at her heart. For a moment, she felt as if she were suffocating. Lord Ronald, too agitated with his own blissful emotion, perceived nothing.

Half an hour afterward they passed out through the garlanded archway, the belt of light from the chandelier above encircling them as by a ring of fire. The diamond on her finger caught the flash of light, and glittered like a star. From behind a tall palm rose up a straight figure she knew full well; she saw—what Lord Ronald lost—a pale, set, masterful face glare at her a dumb anathma of scorn and rage, and again, that terrible pang shot through her heart.

Octavia's pride, however, her fondest ambition was gatified. She returned to the earl's drawing-room, the betrothed of Lord Ronald Falkner, and that night she woke her father to receive his rapturous congratulations.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CARRYING OUT THE PROGRAMME.

Maurice perceived at once that the alarm of his fair companion had its reasonable excuse.

Mathew Merle was there by the gate-way, talking with one of the guard. He spoke a low word of encouragement, and then began chatting in the most nonchalant manner.

He put her in the midst of a group of ladies who occupied one corner of the reception-room, and went out to purchase tickets. Mathew Merle saw him, and nodded grimly. Maurice, sauntering idly along, presently came up to him.

"Ah, good-day, sir. Perhaps you are going up with this train. Would you mind taking a seat in the carriage with me? My wife won't be any interruption; she always goes to sleep when she is in a rail-carriage."

"Your wife! Oh, yes, you came in with a lady. Perhaps she is solacing herself with grand visions connected with Wainwright Slope. Humph! Thank you. I'm not going to take this train."

"You won't fail of your appointment? I shall see my father to-day."

"I told you before I shouldn't fail," he answered, glumly, bending forward to examine a group just entering the building.

"Are you looking for any one?" asked Maurice, with the most innocent air possible.

"Humph!" said Mathew Merle, whirling around on his heel.

Maurice shrugged his shoulders, and walked back to the ladies' room.

The pale face under Mrs. Grey's jaunty hat alarmed him.

"Pray, save yourself so much alarm," he said, in a low voice. "I have been talking with him, and I am sure he is entirely unsuspecting of your identity. I told him my wife was here, even invited him to get a seat in the same carriage, but he is not going in this train."

"But I must walk down the platform there, and go up into the carriage before him. Oh, those terrible eyes of his!"

"Courage! Only a few moments more, and we shall whirl away from him. I shall shield you as much as possible,

and hide you behind the tallest man I can find. He is looking to see you in Will Yarrel's clothing, I am positive."

They heard the approach of the train, and the shouting of the guard, and people began to gather up their bundles hastily, and hurry down to the platform.

"Come," said Maurice, steadily, "understand that, even if he knows you, I shall not give you up to him. I will fight for you, if it is necessary. Can you not trust to my prowess?"

"I can," answered Wilhelmine's clear, sweet voice. "I *will* trust you."

And she put her hand into his arm, and walked beside him steadily. Maurice took good care to fall into the crowd of ladies, and to keep the shawls half over her slender, sloping shoulders, which had made Will Yarrel's form so airy and graceful.

They were safely in the carriage at last, and, after what seemed an interminable delay, the train started.

Wilhelmine drew one long, shuddering breath of unutterable relief, and answered his congratulatory smile.

"The rubicon is passed. Adieu, Mathew Merle! Now, Miss Wilhelmine, I think you ought to ask where I am taking you."

She looked up trustfully with her innocent brown eyes.

"I have little apprehension. I know it will be some place where I shall have peace and quiet. It only needs for me to find Jane, and to escape his search three months longer. I shall be free then from his guardianship, for then the law which gives him such power will itself defend me."

"How thoroughly she trusts me," thought Maurice, all the chivalry and delicacy of his nature vowing to deserve her confidence.

"And since you have so little of the reputed womanly curiosity," he said, aloud, "I must tell my story unsought. I have determined not to venture into London just yet, for I think Mathew Merle will search there as soon as he is sat-

isfied that you are not in Liverpool. I have been stopping myself for some time in a charming little town in Surrey. And there is a good woman there who, I am sure, will keep you with all kindly service, and be faithful against any bribes. I happened to be of service once, when her foolish lad, under the influence of too deep potations of the fair, enlisted in the marine corps. I got him off for her; since when she is ready for any good deed in my behalf. We might take the train all the way, but I prefer to leave, and proceed the latter portion of the journey by stage. I think you will enjoy it better, and it will be safer besides."

His programme was safely carried out.

They chanced to be the only passengers in the old-fashioned, lumbering coach, and could talk freely without fear of listeners.

As they came in view of the gray turrets of Wainwright Slope, crowning the dark green summit of the hill, with the blue sweep of the river dimpling at its feet, his fair companion uttered an exclamation of girlish delight and admiration.

"What a lovely spot! Is it the residence of some of your English noblemen?" she asked.

"No," answered Maurice, gravely. "It is the old ancestral house of the Wainwrights."

He looked at her a moment in silence, and then said, with a smiling glance into her pensive face:

"Do you know that Mathew Merle has the power to establish my father's claim to that fine old place?"

And he told her the story.

She listened with keen interest, and said, at its conclusion, while a soft mist crept over her eyes:

"Do you know that I have cherished wild visions of discovering some such noble old mansion as my rightful home? Alack! I was so foolish and extravagant when I first landed on English soil. I have been taught a bitter

lesson since. I only ask to learn my claim to an honest name. I only desire to put away the one I know does not belong to me."

Widow Damer was standing at her cottage door when the stage passed before the pretty rustic gate, but the moment she recognized Maurice she came down the walk, her honest face brightened with smiles.

"I have brought a young friend of mine to your care, Mrs. Damer," said Maurice, gayly; and then for the moment a little disconcerted by the remembrance that he had forgotten to arrange a name by which she should be known, with his companion, he added: "I was sure you would give her a pleasant home for a few weeks until her own is open to her."

"Bless your heart, Mr. Middleton, I'll do my best. Walk in—walk in, miss."

She led the way into an unpretending little parlor, which was, however, exquisitely neat, and fragrant with the breath of flowers heaped into two china trays.

Maurice had his private word with Mrs. Damer presently, knowing very well her faithfulness to his cause.

"Mrs. Damer," said he, "this young lady is in trouble. She has been shamefully persecuted by the man who claims to be her guardian. She has escaped from him, and I have brought her here to be hidden. I know I can trust you to keep off curious eyes. I shall board at my old place, but I shall come to cheer and comfort her frequently. I want you to be always present on my visits. You understand me. I do not mean to allow the opportunity for a breath of scandal. She is too young and innocent herself to know this horrible, scandal-loving world; but it is none the less my duty to look out for it."

"I understand. Bless your heart, sir! you're a gentleman born, as I've told my Johnny more than once. Yes, sir, I'll be around; and, la sakes! I won't be any hindrance. I

always go to sleep when I sit still. She's a pretty young creature."

This last was said insinuatingly, but did not elicit the desired confession from the young gentleman.

Mrs. Damer, however, had eyes of her own, and it was pretty evident to her how matters stood.

It was a season of enchantment, whose moments slipped away on golden sands, for the young couple, that next week which followed. A letter reached Maurice from Jane West, including a hasty note for her "poor, dear Will," and directed to Master Will Yarrel.

Wilhelmine, who bloomed out every day in some new feminine grace, blushed brightly as she took it from his hand.

"Dear Jane! we must send her word at once. She will rejoice so much to know what kind friends I have found!" said she.

The letter was written on the afternoon of their arrival in Liverpool, and stated her conjecture that the lad had been snatched from Mathew Merle by means of the kind gentleman whose card enabled her to make this attempt at communication with her friend. She begged him to report at once if he had not found the dear boy, but said, if he was safe it would be wise for them to remain apart a little time, giving Mathew Merle's assertion as a reason for that decision.

The letter was answered, and sent to the London office, as directed. The return mail brought a second record, rejoicing in Wilhelmine's security, but full of fierce, stern anger.

"You will see why I cannot come to share your pleasant retreat," wrote Jane, "why I cannot allow myself but one thought, and aim, and employment, when I tell you that my box was empty when I carried it to the lady, and that I am positive you were right in your impression that Mathew

Merle heard our mutual confessions that day in the cabin of the *Royal Bess*. I know that those papers are in his hands, and I must get them back at all costs, at any hazard. I must have them back."

"Poor Jane!" sighed Wilhelmine; "she will allow herself no rest until she has succeeded. She is no match for Mathew Merle."

"But I am. You must admit that," said Maurice, archly.

She smiled, but ended with a little sigh.

"I am not sure. I hardly dare to put my head out of the window for fear he will suddenly appear. You may be sure he is not idle all this time."

"He shall not have you," answered Maurice, fiercely.

But in the midst of the enchantment of that golden life, in which these two learned to know each other better than many are taught by years under the same roof, dropped the long-expected bomb-shell. It was a little thing which started it.

Mrs. Grey, careful housekeeper that she was, could not abide the dusty odor of the suit Will Yarrel had left behind. She sent the girl to hang it out in the clothes-yard. And a policeman, who had an accurate description of that suit, and was still looking out for the game, took due note. Cautious inquiry, and a little flattery to the servant girl, elicited important facts. They had a warning letter from Mr. Grey, deploring the disastrous result of his wife's imprudence, and warning them that the clew would be closely followed.

Maurice brought the letter to Wilhelmine, and put it in her hands with a face of such dismay that she did not need to read it to know what had happened.

She turned very pale, and instinctively held out her hands to him.

"Oh, Maurice, save me."

A gleam of joy leaped into his eyes.

"Wilhelmine," said he, passionately, "there is but one way, only one way of safety. You may defy even a guardian's power if—if——"

He paused, looked at her tenderly and yearningly, and exclaimed impetuously:

"If only you return my love—if only you will marry me, Wilhelmine, I would defy him boldly."

"Marry me, a poor, friendless, nameless girl," stammered Wilhelmine. "Oh, sir, you cannot be so good, so sacrificing as that."

"It will be taking to myself the dearest blessing I could ask for fate to give me. I love you from the very depths of my nature, Wilhelmine. I might live with you years and years, and I do not think I should be more sure than I am now of your worth and goodness. But it is for your sake I hesitate. Are you sure it would not be wrong to give yourself to me?"

She sprang forward, her sweet face aglow with eager trust and deepest joy.

"Maurice, Maurice, I would choose you if a row of noblemen stood asking for my hand. You are right. This close acquaintance, however brief, is often surer than the cold intercourse of careless years."

"Then you will consent?" asked Maurice, tremulously.

"As I would hail life and liberty and my dearest happiness," she answered.

He clasped her in his arms, and the first kiss was exchanged between them.

"Bless my stars!" involuntarily exclaimed Mrs. Damer, quite upsetting the theory she had tried to establish, that when she sat in the window there with her knitting she was sure to be asleep.

They both laughed merrily.

"Now then," said Maurice, brave with his great happi-

ness, "all our trouble is ended, for I am sure my little wife will not be afraid that I shall not be able to keep her in a home as cozy and comfortable as this. Certainly we need not fear want if we will only be content without grandeur."

"I do not ask anything better than this. It is better than a palace with George Merle. Oh, Maurice, Heaven has drifted the poor waif into a joyful harbor."

"There is no time to lose. I am going to a kind man I know, a clergyman; I shall tell him the whole story, and I feel confident of his assistance. I can get a license, too, without much trouble, and Mrs. Damer will lend us her valuable assistance."

"Anything I or my Johnny can do, Mr. Maurice."

"If Jane were only here, but I know it is impossible," said Wilhelmine, with a sigh.

Maurice caught her hands in his.

"You are not afraid—you do not repent?"

The shining eyes, the sweet face drifted over with happy blushes, answered him.

He came back twice to kiss the tremulous red lips, and finally tore himself away with a desperate effort, and hurried off, murmuring:

"Who would believe such a great blessing should come to me in so curious a fashion!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

JANE WEST'S PRAYER.

Mathew Merle had evidence before him of abundant interest when he found his way to the boarding-house keeper who had offered to take care of his effects, and the letters which might arrive. There were plenty of letters, quite

filling the fancy soap-box into which they had been thrust as fast as they had arrived.

"Bless your eyes! here they are, every letter, and nobody's touched 'em, beyond the putting them in this nice clean place," said the burly host, taking out his pipe, and staring in the dark, wrinkled face of the old East Indian, "I allers told 'em you'd turn up in the right time, and sure enough here you are. There's a policeman was down twice to know about you. Something to do with a drowned gal, Mother Woodstock knows about it. They've saved the clothes, you see. Your niece, wasn't it? Well, poor soul! her troubles are ended."

"My niece!" exclaimed Mathew, his black eyes snapping over the letters, the latest of which he had torn open eagerly. "What about my niece?"

"Why, she was missing, and you went off to search for her, didn't you? And they found her drown—ded. You haven't heard about it, I s'pose."

"Found my niece drowned?" repeated Mathew Merle. "When? how? This week, or last?"

"Bless your soul, no. But months ago. And there's the clothes down at the station house now. Mother Woodstock identified them, and it's all recorded there about her death. They brought it to suicide, I believe. But it's down, you can read it. Mina Merle, niece of Mathew Merle, lately arrived from India, identified by the boarding mistress—and all that."

"The devil!" ejaculated Mathew Merle, laying down even the precious letters of his son, and staring fiercely into the speaker's face. "Who's at the bottom of this plot I should like to know?"

The man's face showed his bewilderment. And in a moment more Mathew regained his shrewd self-possession.

"Well, well, I'll look into it," said he, carelessly, "but

it's a mistake, let old Mother Woodstock say what she pleases. I saw my niece alive and well ten days ago."

"That's a queer go!" said the man, peering curiously into the sphinx face.

But the old man was busy over his letters again. He had seized upon the one bearing the latest date, and at the bottom there was a postscript. He raised a shout of joy and triumph when he saw it.

"My boy is coming, my George is coming. He sailed—— why, why, it is time he arrived. I may look for him any day. Oh, this is good news. I must run down to the owners of the Comet, and see whether they have heard from her at all. There, man, drink to the good luck of the good ship Comet."

He tossed a silver coin into the man's hand, thrust the letters into his pocket, and went hurrying out, his face aglow, his very hands trembling with the joy of the news he had found. In the generous glow of his delight, he even gave a coin to the thin-faced beggar-girl who held out her timid hand toward him.

"George is coming! and I have found out the girl's retreat. I shall work the rest to my mind. No one holds the clew, no one but Mathew Merle, and I shall have my way, against them all. I will keep my eye on Miss Wilhelmine, but I will leave her alone until George comes."

He found the owners of the Comet in good spirits likewise. The ship had been spoken by a steamer having made a fine passage to that point. They were looking hourly for the signal of her approach.

Mathew Merle went off in such high glee that he never noticed a woman in a plain dark shawl and bonnet, with a thick veil over her face, who kept at just such a distance from him, let him turn as he might.

He went down to Mother Woodstock, as he called her, and entered bluntly into the object of his visit.

“Look here, Mother Woodstock, what satan’s work have you been helping along? Who was that in the slouched cap, and high-collared cloak, who coaxed you into giving my niece that nice cup of coffee—that coffee you took such pains to prepare. And what were you paid for helping along that pretended suicide, and the registered death of Mina Merle?” began he, the moment he entered the room where the boarding-house keeper sat looking over her newly returned basket of laundry linen.

“Bless my heart, Mathew Merle! How you startle a body,” exclaimed Mrs. Woodstock, so completely taken by surprise that she could not control her features and looked the blank dismay she felt. “Whatever do you mean?”

“Come, come, no blarney, woman, I know the whole story, about the taking of the girl to a ship, and all the rest. In fact I’ve got the girl home again, and she is here in England, sound and well. Now what does it mean that I find her death registered according to your testimony and identification?”

The great red hands of Mrs. Woodstock were fumbling over the clothes, and she bent her head down to the basket to get a moment’s time to think. But that was just what Mathew Merle meant she should not do.

“Come, come,” said he. “I’m going up with my story to the police. I can tell them something about your drugging that coffee, and when poor Mina was helpless, taking her clothes to put on some poor wretch, and dressing her in boy’s garments. I can tell——”

“Good Heaven, Mathew Merle! you won’t give a body a chance to breathe! Why don’t you ask me in civil fashion, and maybe then I should tell you everything you want to know,” ventured the woman, in an insinuating tone. “Sit down, won’t you, and I’ll have in a mug of ale.”

“I don’t want the ale, but I am willing to hear the truth.

Just own up, and you will save yourself a deal of trouble, now, I can tell you."

"Humph! There's other folks can tell, too. You're very much worried about your *poor* Mina now. Time was you hadn't too much compassion."

"You won't make anything by that game. I'm the girl's guardian, and if she is stubborn and bad behaved, it's my place to help it. What I want to know of you is who that fellow was in the cloak, the fellow with the hatchet face and the gray eyes, and I want you to own up that it's not Mina Merle who is buried in the pauper's grave. A sharp game somebody meant to play."

"They wasn't gray eyes at all," said the woman, promptly. "The eyes were great big blue ones, and looked oddly with the whiskers. I don't mind owning up, Mathew, if you promise it will be safe for me."

"A good deal safer than the other way. But I want to know that chap. You don't remember; the eyes must have been gray."

"No, they were not; I'll stake my life on that; and if you don't mean to be cross, I can tell you more. He dropped a ring here—pulled it out of his pocket somehow—and there's a mark inside of it."

"Let me have it," said Mathew Merle, setting his lip grimly.

She laughed slyly.

"But first I want you to say that I shall get clear of the trouble. I'll take your word for it, Mathew Merle."

"Of course you will. And if you'll make a clean breast of it, and help me to prove the dead girl was not my niece. I won't mind rewarding you, besides insuring your safety."

"All right. Ask your questions as fast as you like, and I'll answer true—honor bright."

"First, then, who *do* you think that fellow was in the cloak and cap and false whiskers? I know you for a woman

as curious as the next, and I'll venture to swear you didn't let the matter rest without trying to ferret it out."

Mother Woodstock shook her head, and struck her coarse hands together angrily.

"She was a cunning one, now, I tell you. I did the best I could, and only found out the ring, and that it was no man."

"No man!" ejaculated the listener, staring at her like one demented. "You don't mean it was a woman?"

"But I do. That much is pretty clear to me."

"Let me see the ring," said Mathew Merle.

She thrust her hand into her pocket, drew out a long silk purse, once gay with steel beads, but rusted now and frayed; slipped the steel rings away, and brought forth a heavy ring, with an agate stone, on which was carved what seemed a family crest.

The keen black eyes snapped with the old basilisk glitter as he looked at it.

"Well," said he, to himself, "if the ring came from the Middletons, they are premature in adopting the crest of Wainwright Slope. It is a high hand somebody is carrying, that is certain."

"It was a woman," persisted Mother Woodstock. "You may start on that. Now look at the letters inside the ring."

The old man held it up, and read the delicately traced characters there:

"Octavia, from her father."

"Humph!" said he, "that is worth taking note of, whether anything comes of it or not."

And then he fell into a deep reverie. But the glad consciousness that was overflowing and bubbling up within him, in almost boyish excitement, soon dispersed the momentary gravity.

"Well, I am not going to fret over it to-day. But it is

well for you, Mother Woodstock, that you concluded to tell me the truth. We'll get to the bottom of it presently. My George is coming, and he will look into it. My son is coming to England. The vessel is looked for every day."

And having told this with as much proud importance as if he had informed her of his inheritance of a throne, he took his leave, taking with him the ring bearing the Wainwright crest.

The veiled woman came out from the pawnbroker's shop at the corner a moment after, and followed him as before, to the very door-way of the second-rate hotel where he was stopping.

Mathew tramped up the long flights of stairs, and his pursuer, after a moment's hesitation, followed, and as he took the key from his pocket, and unlocking the door passed in, she came on and looked carefully, not only at the number of his door, but at those adjacent. She went back down stairs to the room allotted for the boarders' sitting-room, found the housekeeper, and was presently installed in a room on the same corridor, which commanded a good view of Mathew Merle's chamber door.

When she was safely alone in this room the woman drew a long, shuddering breath, threw back her veil, and showed Jane West's face, but, alas! with a lack of the old freshness and cheeriness. There were dark circles under the eyes, which shone with their old steadiness, but held also a feverish brightness. She looked worn and tired, but desperately earnest, and set upon some purpose, from which it was plain to see no idle circumstance could turn her aside. She left her door ajar, and sat down where she could catch the first movement from the room beyond. When the gong sounded Mathew Merle was prompt to appear. He locked the door again and put the key in his pocket, and then leisurely descended to the dining-room.

Jane West came out stealthily and silently, a bunch of

keys in her hand, and waited until the lodgers of that floor had descended. She did not feel herself a thief or a meddler when she tried first one and then the other, and she was prompt to say, when the chambermaid came around the corner, with a pack of towels on her arm:

“If you please, can you unlock the door for me? I have got the wrong key, and I’ve come back for a handkerchief.”

Unsuspecting, the girl took her own key and opened the door. Jane’s alert eye searched the room, while a prayer that the object of her search might be there was in her heart.

She walked straight to the red silk handkerchief bundle lying on the bed, opened it hastily, closed it again, and walked out. The chambermaid deposited her fresh towel, re-locked the door, and went her way.

Mathew Merle, after his hearty dinner, came back and sat down a little while for a nap. Then he wrote a letter making an appointment with the Earl of Chichester. After which he went out into the street, bought a small leather case, such as could be thrust into his inner pocket, and returning, he opened the bundle tied in the red silk handkerchief, took out carefully the book of red morocco with the gilt clasps and the yellow packet of papers, and fitted them into the case, and put the case into a pocket made inside his woolen shirt.

“One may as well be cautious,” he said. “A valuable packet like that might be easily taken from me, and there’s plenty as are willing to go to any lengths for it.”

And having thus, figuratively speaking, securely locked the stable door, Mathew Merle walked down to the office of the underwriters, and watched impatiently the signals there announcing the approach of inward-bound vessels.

The Comet was still unheralded, but he saw one of the owners there, who informed him that she was sure to be in

the river before another morning, as such a ship had been seen from below that morning too far off for her private signals to be made out. But it was the Comet, beyond questioning.

"I'll go down to see my Lady Mary early in the morning," said Mathew Merle, "and I'll have plenty of cash on hand when I meet George."

CHAPTER XXV.

"IT IS TOO LATE."

Lord Ronald Falkner was floating on the sparkling wave of a lover's rapturous bliss, and was too happy himself to notice the haggard face of his uncle's newly chosen Australian agent, or even to be aware that his mother was thinner, and whiter, and weaker than on their first arrival. The rose-colored cloud floating around him hid the little signs of gathering gloom in the demeanor of his friends. But when Octavia showed nervous and restless symptoms, and was fitful and capricious in her gay moods, he roused himself to search for the cause, alarmed for the health of her body, and never suspecting what Felix Thorne knew very well, that it was the mind which was diseased. He called in Sir James, one day, by what he deemed a very skillful stroke of diplomacy, and appealed to him for a confirmation of his theory, that his beautiful betrothed was wearing out her strength in persisting to follow up the reckless gayety of the party at Chichester Rookery.

Octavia was present, and could not escape the physician's scrutiny. She was deeply annoyed, but tried to smother the feeling, and yielded her wrist to the examination of Sir James, the indignant blood leaping angrily through her veins, as she said to herself:

"This is unpardonably stupid in Lord Ronald. If he had half the intuitive perception of Felix, he would have seen that this would disturb and vex me."

"A feverish pulse, certainly," said the famous physician, "and I detect symptoms of nervous and sleepless nights. The young lady would certainly be much improved by rest and quiet."

"Rest and quiet, then, she must have," exclaimed the adoring lover. "You will not rebel, I am sure, dearest Octavia, remembering that the precious trust of looking after you devolves upon me, since your father is himself an invalid. You must relinquish these excursions and *fetes*, and the drawing-room nonsense of evenings; but you shall not be left to grow melancholy. I shall devote my whole time to you. I will take you to ride; I will read to you. You shall have a boudoir fitted up especially for your seclusion, and I shall ward away all intruders. No one, but your father and myself, shall be allowed to enter. Ah! what more can one desire? It will be an elysium."

Outwardly Octavia smiled, but within there fell a great horror.

To be shut out from the excitement which alone kept her spirits from sinking into such a dead gloom of foreboding and dread; to be compelled to find all her entertainment in the society of her noble lover, whose presence had already grown tiresome, almost intolerable, from which she was thankful to escape—it was a sorry prospect for a spirit already fretted and chafed.

Again the thought rose, and was bitterly received:

"Felix understands me better. He knows there is no elysium for me, with Lord Ronald for my sole companion."

And a deeper stab came behind:

"This is only the approach of the realization of my pride

and ambition. What will it be when I am fettered to his side for life?"

Yes! Amid the triumph and flattery of her envied position as the betrothed of Lord Ronald, for all her father's deep joy and proud hopes, Octavia was miserable. And it was not the pang of alarm lest the lawsuit should be renewed; it was not the fear of losing Wainwright Slope, nor the dread of any exposure which might come which pressed such sharp pain into her heart. She tried to cheat herself into believing it, but there were times when the truth looked at her unvailed by any sophistry. Her heart had cried out for its true nourishment, and for bread she had given it a stone. It did not ease the smart that the stone was no common pebble, but a rose-diamond set in purest gold.

She saw the cold, stern face of Felix, growing every day more haggard and ghastly, with a wild terror that would not be coaxed into quiet. Yet still she persisted stubbornly upon the appointed course. She could not descend to a lowly position. She, Octavia Wainwright, be willing to marry her father's secretary, the earl's business agent! No, she must shine before the world as Lady Falkner. Let it cost what secret pain it might, the brilliant destiny must be accomplished. And so Octavia smiled, and allowed Lord Ronald to withdraw her, with his lover solicitude, from the only scene which made her life there endurable.

She was petted and caressed, and overwhelmed with his attentions, until she grew to shudder at the very sound of his coming footsteps, to shrink from the slightest touch of his hand.

Lord Ronald was singularly unfortunate in his method of bestowing attentions, and had none of that fine, subtle perception and tact which would have shown Felix so unerringly, just when to leave her alone, and when to soothe and cheer by his companionship. To be sure if Octavia had

only loved him sincerely, she would not have wearied of his companionship, but such constant presence is the test of true love, and Miss Wainwright was found wanting.

General Wainwright had paid his congratulatory visit to Lady Mary, and the pair had enjoyed it vastly, their parental anxieties laid aside, picturing the happy future of their children. It was mutually understood that the sooner the wedding came the better suited the pair would be. And when General Wainwright received a letter from Screw & Scattergood hinting that he must be prepared for a renewal of this suit, the latter had no hesitation in paying a second visit to Lady Mary, and on the plea of the uncertainty of his own health, gently insinuating that it was his ardent desire to see the marriage take place at once.

Lady Mary was equally earnest, and when Lord Ronald was consulted they obtained a willing and joyful consent. The day was appointed by the two before Octavia was consulted, Lord Ronald naturally taking it for granted that her father expressed the wishes of his beautiful betrothed. She heard them calmly when the matter was explained to her, and smiled a gracious acquiescence, but immediately after hurried away out of sight into the first retreat she could find, which chanced to be a little music-room opening between the library and the private parlor of the countess. There she sat down deadly cold, shivering from head to foot.

What had she consented to do? Aside from with her own hand setting the seal of her life-long wretchedness, she had voluntarily agreed to assist in an imposition, a fraud—what else could it be called? The earl and Lord Ronald believed her the heiress of Wainwright Slope and its generous revenue. As such they were willing to lift her to their higher stations. This hurried marriage was her father's work, to secure her against any retraction on their part, when the claim of the Middletons could no longer be con-

cealed. Her cold cheek burned hotly as she tried to picture what the world would say. And then she reassured herself it would not make any difference with Lord Ronald. She had confidence enough in the depth of his affection to know that he would gladly take her portionless as with the generous Wainwright dower. But there was the Earl of Chichester and Lady Mary; it was a very different affair with them! If she could only have seen into Lady Mary's chamber, where that lady sat clasping her thin hands over her throbbing heart, murmuring:

“Oh, I feel like a thief and a coward every time I look into the general's face. What will they think of me if the worst comes, and they learn that I knew all the time, and yet never told them—allowed Octavia to sacrifice her brilliant prospects? Heaven forgive my selfishness, but for poor Ronald's sake I must persist! And, after all, what need she care for the empty title if she loves Ronald? There is no great wrong certainly.”

Thus the two parties, mutually consenting to a cheat, consoled their fears, and cajoled the stings of conscience.

Octavia had but one more trial. As she sat there, white and shivering in the music-room, the library door unclosed, and Felix Thorne came in slowly.

Did he know she was there? He gave no start of surprise, only a satirical smile curled his lip, and a steely gleam in his gray eye betrayed his secret anger.

“Ah, Miss Wainwright! So I am in season to give early congratulations. There is quite a buzz of excitement in the household over the delightful news just proclaimed. I congratulate Lord Ronald. He will have a bride who will wear his coronet with queenly grace.”

Octavia was not unmindful of the disdainful anger of the tone. Her pride helped her to gather up her faculties, and face him without betraying all the weakness of her heart.

“Thank you; I have no doubt Lord Ronald shares your

opinion," she said, brushing the lace ruffles of her sleeve with persevering attention.

Such a look on her part never failed to rouse all the wrath of Felix's fierce nature. His sallow cheek grew hot, his eyes flashed, the thin lips curled angrily.

Octavia knew it, and secretly trembled. How the lightest gesture of that man could sway her proud spirit, while Lord Ronald's most passionate love vow wearied and sickened her.

"Miss Wainwright," said he, "be fierce, and proud, and cold, and haughty, as you like. You know very well a word from me to the earl can dash you down from this pinnacle of your success and triumph. Why should I hesitate to speak it—I, who lose nothing, and gain all?"

Her white fingers still played carelessly with the dainty ruffles. She assumed an air of languid indifference which nearly drove him frantic.

"I don't know why you should, Mr. Thorne; people are usually inclined to act for their own interest."

For a moment his anger rendered him speechless; then he burst forth in a perfect tirade of accusation, in the very midst of which he stopped, and said, in a voice thrilled with the most piteous entreaty and tenderness:

"Octavia! Octavia! my proud, high-spirited bird, meant only to soar in congenial skies, beware how you allow them to thrust you into a cage, although that cage be a gilded palace! Oh, think what it is you risk, what a life you choose! After all, is rank so much? Think of it—a meaningless title, that does not show in a man's looks or acts, that is no part of himself—shall that weigh against a tender heart which holds your allegiance—you cannot, you dare not deny it, Octavia. A love so pure, so idolatrous as mine could not fail to win return. You love me, and you marry Lord Ronald! Octavia! Octavia! have mercy upon yourself, if you have none for me!

“It is no choice between ease and poverty. If it were, one could never blame you. But you know very well my wife will lack no comforts of life, if she fails to win its elegancies. It is only the temptation of rank and power. Believe me—oh, believe me! you will find it a poor and worthless thing! Pause, before it is wholly too late! Listen to me!”

She had not stirred her eyes from the face which in its pale passion seemed to empty upon her the very soul itself. Scarcely had she breathed, only her fingers had fallen away from the filmy lace, and fastened with an iron grip on the massive gold circlet on her finger, in which was blazing the rare rose diamond of the Falkners.

A strong struggle shook her as with an ague.

Felix, awed, and fairly faint with suspense, watched her silently.

She rose at last, whiter than the statue beyond, and almost as rigid looking.

“It is too late now, Felix. I shall marry Lord Ronald!” said Octavia, and went out slowly, as if the movement of her limbs required all her strength.

She heard, with dull ears, the malediction he flung after her.

Two hours afterward he saw her in the drawing-room, receiving with graceful ease the cordial congratulations and gay badinage of the company.

She was to remain only a week longer at Chichester Rookery, and the seclusion having been broken into, Lord Ronald merrily agreed that they should make one couple of a famous yachting expedition which had occupied the minds of the guests for a week past. When that was over Miss Wainwright was to return to her own home, the preparations for a magnificent trousseau and wedding festival were to be hurried up, and Lord and Lady Falkner

were to start, in just six weeks, upon their bridal tour to Germany.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SIMPLE BRIDAL.

Just off a quiet Surrey village, in the little chapel, which nestled under a noble group of walnuts at the corner of the rustic grave-yard, there was a pretty picture one dusky eve, though there were few witnesses to admire it. The tall turrets of Wainwright Slope were visible from the porch steps, and the youthful bridegroom paused a moment and looked over to them, with a vague consciousness that they were somehow interested in the ceremony so soon to take place before the humble altar of the chapel.

The fair young bride glanced neither to the right nor left, and only once lifted those wistful brown eyes, and then dropped them shyly, meeting the proud and happy smile of her lover.

The old minister was waiting for them at the altar, and Mrs. Damer and her son were there, and so was some one else, unexpectedly even to the bridegroom. Mr. John Middleton stepped out from the shadows and silently gave his arm to the bride to lead her up the aisle.

Maurice gave him a grateful glance, and smiled, remembering the upbraiding he had received that very morning when he confided to his astonished parent the news of his proposed marriage that evening with an unknown and probably friendless girl. But Mr. John Middleton's heart secretly yearned over this youngest born, and could not be unforgiving even to what he called his follies. He came secretly to take a look at the bride, and something in the sweet young face had taken fast hold upon his sympathy.

So, acting upon the sudden impulse, he had stepped forward and offered his arm. Wilhelmine guessed by the look which flashed over the face of Maurice who it was, and, with a deeper blush, surrendered herself to his keeping.

And so Mr. John Middleton gave away the bride. The pretty picture was when the pair stood bending down, as flowers bend beneath their wealth of dew, with shining, happy faces, while the good old clergyman, with extended arms, gave them his final benediction.

There was no longer any fear or terror in Wilhelmine's heart; the brown eyes shone clear and steady, luminous with trustful happiness. Maurice also was glad, and confident, and proud. What was the world's laugh or sneer, its grandeur and pomp, to them? Two hearts, innocent and trustful, brimming over with a pure and truthful love; their royal heritage was already with them; no outward circumstance could abate one jot of its glory or beauty; no fear of exposure, no threatening revelation could mar its perfect joy.

Out from the little ring of light which belted the altar, out from the solemn and heartfelt benediction of the good old minister, from the unpolished but sincere congratulations of Mrs. Damer and her son, and followed by even John Middleton's unconscious blessing, the youthful pair passed on, to meet the tender smile of a new moon beaming down lovingly full upon the chapel door.

"Why, Maurice, there is a new moon! How beautiful it is," whispered Wilhelmine.

"Let us accept it as a good omen. Now, my darling, we may defy Mathew Merle. You need search no longer for a name. Does it frighten you to know that it is Mrs. Maurice Middleton now? Such a young thing for a wife, my pretty Will!"

"No, I am not afraid now," she answered, "not afraid

of anything in the world, but of losing you, or your love, Maurice."

And the pair passed on. Such a simple bridal. No satin or point lace; no orange blossoms or diamonds; no crowd of waiting carriages, and admiring bride-maids, and curious friends. How the crowd of modistes, and milliners, and jewelers, and innumerable other artistes, busy over the approaching great event, which was to transform the heiress of Wainwright Slope into the lady of Falkner Castle, would have sneered and scouted.

But the softest starlight trembled a loving radiance from the blue above, and the silver crescent smiled auspiciously; and as they passed through the overhanging shrubbery, the playful boughs showered upon them a sparkling cascade of nature's pearls and diamonds, and best and most beautiful of all, within the two joyful hearts reigned perfect love and trust.

"We will have our bridal tour as well as the best of them," said Maurice. "I am going to show you London in a most romantic guise. And then we will take a trip to Scotland."

"Oh, can we find Jane West?" said Wilhelmine, eagerly.

"If hunting over London, and sending to the address she gave will do it, certainly we can."

"That will be the crowning charm," sighed Wilhelmine, in the fullness of content.

"And I do not mean it shall be any commonplace journey to London. I am going to get the cozy pony carriage at the corner, and a driver, and take an out-of-the-way, zigzag course through the charming country between this and London."

"Like one of our dark journeys in India, only with a vast difference in the likeness," said the bride, with a smile. "It will be the most delightful thing in the world, Maurice, unless——"

“Well, give me the benefit of the doubt.”

“Unless we should chance to meet Mathew Merle. I am not afraid now. But I should be sorry to spoil this journey by any angry strife.”

“It is hardly likely we shall see any one we know,” returned Maurice, “though I mean to take Felix on the way.”

And the next day, followed by Mrs. Damer's blessing, and an old slipper flung after them for luck, as she explained to her son, the youthful couple set out for London. Half an hour after they had gone, two of Mathew Merle's agents came to Mrs. Damer's door in hot haste, with the legal authority for taking one Mina Merle in charge, and taking her to London to her uncle.

Mrs. Damer quietly informed them that the young lady had already gone. Their close inquiries elicited a description of the carriage, and the young woman's companion, but no hint of the recent marriage. And then the pair posted off in hot pursuit.

* * * * *

On that same morning there had been a bustle of excitement in the court-yard of the great mansion at Chichester Rookery, as the gay party set out to ride some dozen miles to the landing-place, where the famous yacht, which the earl's friend, Lord Dexter, an ardent and accomplished boatman, had loaned for their accommodation, lay moored. They had made preparations for several days' absence, and went off in the highest spirits. Even Octavia had brightened into something like genuine enjoyment; and as the elderly people, who were to be left behind, stood on a balcony watching them off, Octavia took off her cashmere scarf and waved it gayly in answer to the fluttering lace handkerchief of Lady Mary, and the repeated hand adieus of her father.

Lord Ronald, who was driving the pretty phaeton, also turned a bright face backward, and nodded a gay adieu.

Lady Mary turned to the general with a mingling sigh and smile. Of all the gay and happy faces, only those two had riveted her attention, or his.

"They make such a fine couple, general," she said; "I think we may be pardoned for our fondness and pride."

"They do, indeed, your ladyship. One must search very far to find their equal," answered the old general, brushing off a drop of mist from his eyelash. He had had his own anxiety for a little time back. His daughter's best efforts had not concealed from him the fitfulness of her moods, and the secret trouble which wore upon her. It was such a relief to find her so bright and gay again.

"After all, I have been mistaken," he thought. "It was probably some little woman's vagary, some misunderstanding between lovers, which is made up now. I am sure I could not ask to see her look more smiling and happy. And the wedding will come off before that suit can be brought on, and these noble relations will carry great weight at the trial, and they will help me to fight off those beggarly Middletons. She will be safe, at all events, my peerless Octavia; and for this old hulk of mine, it does not matter—the grave will claim it before long."

And with another hastily wiped tear, he turned away. Lady Mary, however, still bent over the balcony, following eagerly the carriage as it swept around the curve of the avenue, and obtaining the latest possible glimpse of the straight, graceful shoulders and erect head of the young lord.

"There!" said she, lightly, "I have had the last look."

"Oh," exclaimed the countess, "how could you? Don't you know it is unlucky to watch anybody away?"

"Indeed I have ceased to be interested in omens about myself," replied Lady Mary.

"But the ill luck is not for the watcher," persisted the sister-in-law. "It is for those who are taking leave. Oh, I am so sorry about it."

"Nonsense!" said the earl, impatiently, seeing the swift look of apprehension crossing the general's face, "we shall have them all back day after to-morrow to laugh at such absurdity."

He put his arm around his sister, and playfully led her into the house, back to her own private apartments.

"The countess is going with the general for an airing," he whispered. "All these young busybodies are out of our way. We will have this odious matter settled at once, Mary. I wrote for that man to come down to-day with the papers."

She gave his hand a grateful pressure. To have those papers in her hand, and to see Ronald safely married—ah, what a rest the very thought was! It seemed to her that when the numb pain should leave her heart, the tight pressure be removed from her brain, when these happened—that somehow all the perplexity and crookedness, even the wrong-doing, would be made right presently. A sort of ecstatic calmness, that was yet full of solemn awe, fell upon her. As though from out the shadowy mysteries of the unseen world a voice had spoken, and bade her to be comforted and fear nothing—a voice whose language was unfamiliar, and yet whose tones were well remembered and beloved—she marveled herself at the quiet and serenity with which she waited an hour, two hours beyond the appointed time, while the earl was tearing furiously to and fro, muttering his fierce anathemas against the delinquent, and declaring a dozen times that the man had cheated them and was playing them false.

Two hours and a half beyond the appointed hour Mathew Merle made his appearance, and the earl, who hurried him up to his sister's sitting-room, knew by his looks that some

great agitation overmastered him; therefore refrained from the angry reprimand he intended.

"I have kept you waiting," said Mathew Merle, "but it wasn't my own fault. I was waylaid by an officer of the law and a couple of simpletons who fancied I intended to escape from a summons to attend a trial as witness when the assizes come on. They made me give down some written testimony. Much good may it do them!"

"Yes, we have waited. I almost believed you would fail to come," said the earl.

"No fear of that. I was hindered the last hour by good news of my own. People like me have feelings, you know, almost as keen and sensitive as those of lords and ladies. And there's a ship just been signaled coming up the river. The Comet, from the Indies—and she has a right costly cargo, I'll be bound; but it is all of little account to me, in comparison with the passenger she brings. My son, you see, an only child, and I haven't seen him since I left Calcutta myself. And that reminds me I haven't much time to waste, for I must get back and be on the wharf to give him the first greeting. My son George, your ladyship," and he turned toward the countess with a proud smile, "you will understand something what I feel, who are taking so much pains to secure your own son's position."

The haughty spirit of the earl chafed at this familiarity of speech; but he bit his lip, and kept silence. It was the countess who spoke first.

"We understand that you have brought those papers. Of course we must see that they are genuine before we hand you such a sum as you demand. One half the money, I understand from the earl, has been paid to your order already, to prove the good faith on our side. Will you show me the papers now?"

Mathew Merle glanced a moment with keen curiosity into the calm, white face.

“Certainly, certainly, your ladyship.”

And he put his hand into that inner pocket, and drew forth the new leather case which held the fatal papers, and laid it on the table, opening it slowly, and laying out first the book bound in red Morocco, with dingy gilt clasps, and then the packet.

The countess followed every movement with her attentive eyes. At sight of the book a little cry escaped her, and she clasped her hands quickly across her heart.

Oh, the years between since her own hand, in girlish glee, gave such a book to Arthur Morley! The sight of it was like a ghost rising out of a grave to confront her.

The earl took it, and brought it silently and put it into her lap. She shuddered, and then silently opened the covers.

At that moment a servant came to the door.

“A woman is down stairs, Lady Mary, who is very anxious to see your ladyship at once.”

“I told you, Robert, we were not to be disturbed by any one,” said the earl, indignantly.

“The young woman is very set about it, your lordship, and wouldn’t hear what I said.”

“We cannot see any one, Robert. If her business is of importance to her, she must wait,” added the earl, decidedly.

The man withdrew.

Lady Mary had not seemed aware of anything going on in the room ; but suddenly she started to her feet, and exclaimed:

“Why, why, this is an imposition! It’s not what I thought it. The first page is scribbled with meaningless phrases, and the rest is blank.

She held the book up, and showed that, while the outside

had been made to look old and worn, inside it was fresh, and beyond the first leaf blank pages.

Mathew Merle stared at her in an amazement which could hardly have been counterfeited.

"It was written through to the very last leaf, and some sheets of note-paper fitted in besides. What have you done to it?" demanded he.

She held it out to him, having recovered her composure, with a quiet dignity, which rebuked his presumption.

"And the papers?" exclaimed the earl, in dismay.

Mathew Merle tore open the package, scattering them over the table. They were, most of them, simply folded scraps of discolored paper.

The fatal proofs which were of such priceless value to his noble companions—which were to yield such a golden harvest for Mathew Merle to lay at the feet of his newly arrived son, were—*not there!*

"Villain!" exclaimed the earl. "You have been playing a bold game, and we have been infamously duped."

"Hush!" cried the countess, turning her ashy face toward him. "I hear General Wainwright's voice. They have returned from the drive, and he is coming here."

The earl turned his head to listen.

She was right.

General Wainwright came directly to the door, and knocked, speaking outside as he did so:

"My dear Lady Mary, I have come to crave your mercy. Here is a young woman down stairs in great distress, because you refuse to see her. She appealed to me, and—and—you know I'm an old soldier. How could I refuse a young woman's petition? I've made bold to bring her to your door. If you will only be gracious, and open it."

"There is no alternative now," said Lady Mary, softly, and rose herself and opened the door.

"Thank you—thank you! I told the young woman you

were always gracious," said the general, stepping forward with that gallant, punctilious politeness of his, and ushering in, to the astonished eyes of two at least of the party present, the pale, eager, but still steady face, of—Jane West.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ARTHUR MORLEY'S DAUGHTER.

Jane West sprang forward and seized the hand of the astonished Lady Mary.

"I have come in season. You have made no concessions to that man——"

And she pointed, while her gray eye flashed and her lip curled scornfully, toward Mathew Merle, who glared upon her in almost insane anger.

"No," answered Lady Mary, glancing uneasily from the earl to General Wainwright.

"Thank Heaven that my task may be yet faithfully discharged. Here, madam, is the legacy of Doctor Morley, uninjured, safe from any harm."

She put into the lady's outstretched hands the genuine book in the faded morocco binding, with the clasp, whose gilding had been sadly tarnished by changes of climate, and rolling years, and salt-sea airs. She gave also the packet of papers—fatal, fatal papers, which had power to work such strange transformations—and put herself, with her steady, self-reliant face, between them and Mathew Merle's vengeful looks.

"How dared you!" cried the old man between his clenched teeth.

Jane smiled upon him scornfully.

"I brought them out of many dangers, for my dead mas-

ter's sake. Did you think I should be balked by a thief's tampering fingers?"

The earl had changed as many colors as a schoolboy detected in an unlawful act. He tried to draw aside the bewildered old general.

"Come, my dear General Wainwright, let us leave the ladies to settle their odd little affair."

"But is it safe to leave that man here?" stammered the general, pointing where Mathew Merle, in all his passion of anger and defeat, glared upon them.

"I will attend to him myself, if you will retire——"

Mathew Merle, quite beside himself with rage, leaped forward and laid his claw-like hand on the soft, womanish one of the general—on whose finger glittered the great seal ring, with the coat of arms, of the master of Wainwright Slope.

"Hold! you need not think you have done with me yet—not one of you. So this is General Wainwright. I happen to know a few matters of interest to the gentleman. You have not introduced us yet, my lord. I am Mathew Merle, sir—Mathew Merle, of Calcutta. I am seventy-one years old, but my faculties are well preserved, as you see, and I have a most vivid remembrance of my youthful days. I was only a lad, to be sure, but I have very fresh recollections of a relative of yours. *Arthur Wainwright* was a boon companion of my father's, and then there was his cousin Gustavus. I can remember every item of our journey to Australia to be present at his wedding. Bless me! when I think of it, it is but yesterday. After all, India is a better climate than England. I appeal to the company if they would believe General Wainwright here only fifty-eight years old, or that I could be thirteen years his elder."

He looked around him in sardonic triumph, getting through this long speech without interruption, because, however angry, the earl was struck dumb by the shivering terror which crept over the general's face.

"Ahem, I should like to talk with you, sir," said General Wainwright, making a great effort to speak in an indifferent tone. "Your reminiscences will be of much interest to me. Will you come to my private sitting-room?"

"No," answered Mathew Merle, hotly. "I will talk in private with none of you; what I have to say shall be before you all, and I can promise you it does not lack interest."

Lady Mary had thrust the papers into her pocket, and sat with her hands across the diary, pressing it against her heart, looking around almost like one without knowledge of what was taking place before her eyes. She had read the first page with its faded lines; the second, in her own handwriting, of a girlish frolic, and this present to Arthur Morley, and his promise to fill it out accurately with the story of his life. Oh, the years, the wrongs, the woes between that day toward which it carried her back, as if with the freshness of yesterday, and this, wherein she sat there, a faded, sickly, care-worn woman, and he was lying in his far-off Australian grave! No wonder, with all this past pressing upon her, her eyes were dazed, and her ear dulled to what was passing in the room before her.

"I think, noble earl, this General Wainwright is soon to be connected with your family," went on Mathew Merle, sneeringly, in his high, shrill voice. "Report says that Lord Ronald Falkner is soon to lead to the hymeneal altar the beautiful and wealthy heiress of Wainwright Slope. Does report speak truth?"

"It does," answered the earl, indignantly, "but what is that to you?"

"Lord Ronald Falkner and the heiress of Wainwright Slope!" repeated Mathew Merle, and burst into a long, loud laugh, whose insolence made the earl turn white with rage, and lay his hand on the bell-rope.

"Ring away," said Mathew, scornfully, "if you like to

have your servants hear what I can tell. It does not matter, though. They will know it before long."

The earl's hand fell away. But he looked as if a few more words would provoke him to hurl the insolent intruder from the window.

"Vile impostor!" said he, "take yourself away before I forget myself in anger at your impudence."

"Impostor! impostor!" repeated Mathew Merle, with mocking emphasis. "Thank you for the word. I was just looking for one to express my ideas of this noble and high-bred couple, Ronald, Lord of Falkner Castle, and Octavia, heiress of Wainwright Slope. A precious pair of impostors, indeed! Thank you, noble earl, for the fitting word."

And again he laughed long, and loud, and contemptuously.

Lady Mary's ear was opened now, the mother's ear keen to catch the first sound of danger for her child. She sprang up with a little appealing cry. The general held up a threatening hand.

All in vain; Mathew Merle was determined to have his revenge for his baffled scheme.

"Ronald, son of a woman who was legally married to one Arthur Morley, who died since Lord Falkner, only this very year. What a strong claim he possesses—this son of a marriage whose bride had already a husband!"

Lady Mary saw the wild alarm on the general's face, and fell back heavily into her chair.

"Octavia," went on the inexorable voice, "daughter of a man who has usurped another's rightful claim, daughter of the second son, while the elder son's heirs are alive and legally sustained in their claim to oust him from his place. What a genuine heiress for Wainwright Slope! Indeed, my noble earl, I thank you for your word; what a pair of impostors, indeed!"

"General Wainwright, is this true?" exclaimed the earl.

The poor old general's face was sufficient answer, but he plucked up courage to turn to Lady Mary drearily.

“And Ronald is not Lord Falconer at all——”

Mathew Merle laughed loud and triumphantly.

Lady Mary covered her haggard face from sight!

“I have not done with you yet, my lady, nor with you, Geoffrey Wainwright. I said the heirs of the second son had a better right than this Octavia, or her father. And so they have. But there is a stronger claim behind. Geoffrey's daughter cannot have Wainwright Slope, nor can Gustavus' sons, though he was lawfully married, and the Middletons are his legal heirs. For Arthur Wainwright was left the true heir by the codicil of old Hugh's will. And Arthur Wainwright was married before he left England. The boy who followed him everywhere was his wife; and her son, Arthur Morley by name, came to England, all unknowing of the rich estate which was his right. Arthur Morley married secretly, but legally, the fair Lady Mary yonder. He was a fool to be so thrust aside, when all those proofs were there to right him. But that is neither here nor there. There was a child! What an innocent visit that was of yours, my immaculate Lady Mary, when you went off to the dear school-friend in Wales, and staid so many weeks!”

Lady Mary started up, her eyes fairly blazing.

“Be still, man! Meddle not with misery too sacred for your sneering lips!”

“Arthur Morley started with the child, having full faith that the fair young mother would keep her solemn promise, and come after him. You best know he bore the news which came instead, that she had risked her fair neck to a halter, and boldly married Lord Falkner. The child was put to a careful nurse, with a birthmark on its arm which prevented any fear of deception. But, alas! it died. Did it not, my lady?”

The frozen-looking lips of Lady Mary murmured, stiffly:

"Are you a fiend, that you delight in my torment? Arthur sent me the letter of the nurse telling of his death."

"The letter was a forgery," said Mathew Merle, coolly. "I wrote it myself. The child did not die. I carried it to India. I have cared for her, with due regard to this splendid development. The legal heiress of Arthur Morley, who was adopted into one Aaron Morley's family, is the true owner of Wainwright Slope. She is alive, and in England."

"Oh, Will—my sweet little Will!" cried out Jane West. "Now it is all explained."

Mathew Merle frowned upon her.

But Lady Mary had rushed toward him, her pallid face glowing as with inward flame.

"Alive! Arthur's child and mine—alive! Show her to me! Bring her to her wretched mother!"

"Not yet, my lady. The secret is mine. The girl is safely in my keeping. I am her appointed guardian. I left strict directions for her to be brought to London, in readiness for the arrival of the good ship Comet. She will be married to my son in the morning, and I shall proceed at once to establish her rights. But, mind you, the proofs of this strange story, though I have taken care to establish them beyond the possibility of doubt, are all in my possession—every one."

"Proofs?" repeated Lady Mary, with feverish impatience. "I ask for no proofs. I want my child. Arthur Morley's child and mine!"

"I know her. I will find her for you," cried out Jane West, rushing forward, the tears pouring from her pitying eyes. "Do not believe him. She is not in his power. She is safe. Oh, no wonder I loved her so! She is Doctor Morley's daughter."

Mathew Merle flamed an ireful glance upon her.

"You will not meddle in this affair again, young woman."

I tell you I have had a man watching her for ten days back. I know how that silly youngster took her away, but my men went for her this morning."

"I do not believe it!" exclaimed Jane, indignantly.

"And this girl, this heroine of such a strange story, has proofs to thrust out my beautiful Octavia!" cried the poor general, shading his face with his shaking hands. "Oh, it is cruel! wicked! What will become of my Octavia?"

"She must marry Lord Ronald Falkner," sneered Mathew Merle. "You have been congratulating yourself upon the match. I took a look into the matter to see who ought to have the estate of the Falkners, and I find the title is extinct; but there ought to be issue from one of the daughters on the other branch, one Anne Thurston, who can claim the estate. She made a low marriage, and went off to England, and there I lost her."

"Ann Thurston!" exclaimed Jane West, involuntarily, and stopped abruptly.

"Do you know about her?" demanded Mathew Merle, sharply.

"It was my mother's name, and she married Robert West," faltered Jane, her head all in a whirl, trying to guess if Doctor Morley suspected anything of this when he took such pains to look up the proofs of her parentage.

"Your mother! Well, I can't say I'm particularly pleased to know that I have brought you to the knowledge of this good fortune. I owe you no good will, with your marplots."

There was a general hush, and natural dismay in the room, and the looks and gestures of all would have served an artist for a startling picture.

Amid the silence, a servant knocked from outside, and said, with a deprecating voice:

"Indeed, my lord, I hope you won't blame me, but things come so queerly to-day. There's a young gentleman and

lady below who called to see Mr. Felix Thorne, and when I told them he had gone with the yachting expedition they started away in their carriage, but all at once the young lady cried out that she saw a face at the window of a friend they were trying to find; and she will give me no peace until I come and inquire if one Jane West is not here."

"Let me go to her!" screamed out Jane West, in a perfect paroxysm of delight and expectation. "I know who it is! oh, I know who it is!"

And she rushed down the great staircase, out of the broad corridor into the hall, and seized upon pretty Wilhelmine, also one flutter of joyful agitation.

"Oh, Will, my darling! my precious! I am so thankful you are here!"

"Dear Jane! dear Jane! I knew it was your face!"

"And you are no longer nameless and obscure—oh, Will, there is so much to tell!"

And Jane held the lovely little creature in her arms and kissed her, slowly and solemnly now.

That broad, full forehead, the sweet gravity of the lips, the wistful brown eyes—they were Doctor Morley's own!

"Oh, my own! my own!" sobbed Jane West, all the calm of her nature broken up.

"Not quite all yours," said Wilhelmine, her sweet face dimpling with smiles and blushes. "See! here is some one else—my husband, Jane!"

And then Maurice came forward, holding out his true, honest hands for greeting.

"Don't scold us, Miss Jane. We were so sure of each other's love, and we took the safest way to defy Mathew Merle."

"Married! married! you two married!" repeated Jane, in consternation.

"If you are angry I shall never forgive you!" exclaimed Wilhelmine, indignantly, withdrawing herself hastily from

Jane's arm, and leaning trustfully against her husband's shoulder.

"Come up stairs, both of you. This is better settled now than any time."

And she led the way promptly, where the pale, dismayed group still stood, with exulting, defiant Mathew Merle in their midst.

He darted forward at the first sight of Wilhelmine, but Maurice flung his arm around her, and warded off his grasp toward her shoulder.

"Take care, sir; this lady is my wife."

"Your wife!" vociferated Mathew, fiercely. "What fool's talk is this?"

"It is simple, honest truth. Shall I show you the recorded certificate of a legal marriage," was the cool return.

"Legal absurdity! the girl is my ward."

"She has another and better guardianship now, that of a husband."

Lady Mary had seen and listened, all a-tremble with the dawning revelation.

She took a step toward the fair young creature, clinging with such loving trust to the young man's sheltering arm.

"This girl, this girl," she faltered, and turned her imploring eyes from Mathew Merle to Jane West.

"You guess rightly, Lady Mary," the latter hastened to say. "It is Dr. Morley's child, your daughter."

It was Wilhelmine's lips which uttered the sharp cry. Lady Mary was like a statue of snow, only for the yearning love which seemed to hold all the life and warmth of her nature in the imploring eyes. The girl had dropped her hold upon the young husband's arm. She sprang forward, she dropped on her knees at Lady Mary's feet.

The latter bent down and caught her to her heart.

“My daughter—oh, my Arthur’s child! It is I who should kneel for your forgiveness.”

That sobbing transport of pain and joy was too holy a scene to be broken upon lightly.

Only poor old General Wainwright crept away, muttering:

“She is the heiress. She is Arthur’s grandchild. Oh, my poor Octavia! What shall I say to Octavia?”

And presently Mathew Merle, after a savage threat to Maurice to try the law upon the case, followed after.

And the earl drew Maurice aside and heard from him the whole history, and went pacing to and fro, asking, with moody brow:

“What will be done with Ronald? Oh, how will poor Ronald bear to hear of this wretched revelation?”

But Lady Mary, holding this daughter, with Arthur Morley’s brow, and eyes, and smile, close to her heart, sat whispering:

“Heaven is merciful! Such sweet comfort comes out of this bitter woe. I will trust that the rest will be ordered wisely. Who knows but this girl, this Jane West, will marry Ronald, and no harm come to any?”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAPTAIN LO’S AMAZEMENT.

Mathew Merle, half-choked with vindictive passions, wild in his determination to gain possession of the heiress of Wainwright Slope, to procure a legal dissolution of her marriage, went posting back to London in furious haste.

Even his great delight in his son’s return could not dissipate the black passions which raged in his heart. To think how he had planned and plotted, and waited all these

years—and now George was come—and this strippling had outwitted his spies, and married her. It was well the latter did not come within his reach. Even in the midst of his fury, he saw how his own cunning overreached itself. He never hinted to his agents that such a marriage would ruin his plans. He only claimed before them a guardian's power, nor whispered a word of his son's coming to marry an heiress. And this was the result. He cursed his own folly and their stupidity, and only soothed his lowering forehead when he reached the dock and saw the Comet safely moored.

He rushed aboard and met one of the owners, who had shared his impatience for his son's arrival. A look came across the man's face as he recognized him, which went to Mathew Merle's heart like a dagger. Now, all at once, his fury and rage at baffled plans dropped away before a deadlier pang.

"My son!" exclaimed he—"what has happened to my boy?"

The man brushed his hand across his eyes and called to the captain, who, when he knew who it was, came tardily and reluctantly, and hemmed, and cleared his voice, and choked again, and finally could only falter brokenly:

"It's very bad, sir. I'm sorry for you, sir. There was only two cases aboard, and the other got well nicely."

"What is it?" demanded Mathew Merle, hoarsely.

"Your son, sir, was taken down with the cholera before we got out of the Hooghly, or rather right down by the mouth. We had a doctor from Diamond Harbor, and we did everything, but he died the second day."

There came no further word of questioning. A convulsive shivering went through the limbs, the eyes glared wildly. Then down at the startled shipmaster's feet fell a stiffened, helpless form.

They picked him up, worked over him unsuccessfully, and then carried him on a stretcher to the hospital. He

lived another day and night, but gave no look or sign of consciousness.

Apoplexy of the brain, the wise doctors announced.

"A cleaving of the man's heart," said the honest sailor, "by the very news I brought him."

* * * * *

The party at Chichester Rookery did not learn the particulars of the solemn event for full a fortnight after. They had their own somber warning to receive.

Wilhelmine and her husband had of course remained to await the settlement of the unexpected turn of affairs. Jane West also accepted the earl's earnest if not cordial invitation. If she were really the true owner of the Falkner property, she had her right, and need not feel like an intruder. She had settled her course of action without any consultation even with Wilhelmine and her husband.

Lady Mary was singularly free from disquietude. The earl was almost angry with her, remembering what awaited Ronald's return. He even ventured to hint that this newly found daughter seemed to have stolen away the affection her son had held for so many years.

She looked up wistfully into his face.

"I do not wonder you blame me, Philip," she said, sorrowfully. "I have accused myself more than once of hard-heartedness in poor Ronald's case; but somehow I seem to feel assured it will be well with him."

"I have sent off a messenger to intercept the yacht if possible, and bring them home. I am afraid the poor general will wear himself out with fretting before his daughter comes. He would have returned home, or to a hotel, but I would not listen to the proposition," answered the earl. "It is a sad business."

But it did not need the earl's messenger to waylay the yacht; a more terrible summons intercepted it.

One day there came a carriage dashing in hot haste up the avenue.

Felix Thorne sprang out, and lifted from it Octavia Wainwright, whose face was closely veiled. Her father was nervously on the watch, and knew in a moment what the arrival was. He hurried out of his room, and his daughter, in another moment, flung herself upon his neck.

"Octavia, my darling, oh, my poor Octavia!" sobbed the old man. "How can I tell you all the ruin of our hopes?"

She put back her veil, and showed him a grave, pale face, but with a new steady light, that he had never seen before, in the resplendent eyes.

"Papa, dear papa! there is no ruin. I do not know what you have heard; but I am happier, truer, better worthy to be happier now than I have ever been before."

"Oh, my darling! You cannot marry Lord Ronald!"

"Father, Lord Ronald is dead! The yacht was run into by a steamer at dead of night. Of all that company flung out to the cold waves and the black night, only two were lost—a sailor and Lord Ronald."

"The yacht lost! your life in peril!" he cried, catching her in his arms, and suddenly seeing how small and poor was the loss he had hitherto deplored. "Heaven be praised, you are safe!"

She clung to him, shuddering with the horror of the remembrance of a night of terror, and presently gasped, in answer:

"It was Felix who saved me. I was by Lord Ronald when the spar fell, and went over with him. Oh papa, don't ever ask me about it. I came up out of the jaws of death, and my old self died, and was buried there in those roaring waves. Now I shall live another life. I said it before I knew Lord Ronald was lost. I told Felix while yet he upheld me in the water, knowing not whether we were to live or die. I told him then I had always loved him—

only him. I made him take off Lord Ronald's ring. I confessed all my sin and folly. We absolved each other. We said henceforth we would be true, and honest, and be content with the happiness of virtue. We said, both of us, we would have no more to do with the Wainwright estate, except to hunt for the true heir. We would be poor and happy—oh, so happy, papa! for I love Felix, and Felix loves me. With my mother's fortune, and what Felix can earn—you know what a genius he has—we can make a pretty home. Papa, papa, only give us your blessing, and leave Wainwright Slope, which was never our right—(oh, papa, you know it as well as I, for I read that letter to you from poor Arthur's widow)—only come and live with us, and be happy, and it is all your Octavia asks."

She clung to him, weeping softly. Was it his proud, haughty, ambitious Octavia? He could hardly realize it. But, ah! the unutterable relief—to be spared the heart-broken misery he had anticipated!

"Bring me your Felix!" he cried, triumphantly. "You know very well I cannot be angry with you or him."

Still she clung, kissing his hands swiftly.

"But, papa, there is something else. He is more than he seems. He is Felix Thorne Middleton—one of the Middletons of the odious case, you know."

"If he were twice a Middleton, I have not a word to say, except of welcome. He saved my daughter's life, and Octavia loves him."

Now she rose up, jubilant, and yet with a seemly gravity, which remembered that the other lover was following up the avenue, cold and white, as the cruel waves left him.

She went out swiftly, and returned in a moment more, leading Felix. They knelt together before the old veteran, whose blurred eyes could scarcely see them.

"I am all unworthy such a blessing," said Felix, humbly. "But I have confessed all my sins. I have cast out

the evil, and the noble ambition is still left me to deserve Octavia's love, and give best fruition to her pride."

The general let his hands linger long upon the bowed heads.

"Heaven bless you! Oh, this is such a blissful ending to my fears! But poor Lord Ronald!"

"He loved me, I think, sincerely," said Octavia. "Perhaps it is best he is spared this, for it would have come. I tore off his ring, even before I knew I should be saved."

"Oh, he is spared even more than this. You are right; it is far better he has gone quickly from the knowledge of these direful changes."

"It is for his poor mother I grieve," said Felix.

"Come and see them. Let us finish the story now," said the general, and as he led them, he told what had happened in their absence.

Felix and Octavia stretched out their hands in eager gladness.

"The true heir is found. Now we may rest in peace."

They found the countess weeping and wailing over the inanimate body of the handsome young nephew, gone by such untimely means to his early death.

"Oh, that dreadful omen, Mary! I said you were wrong to follow him to the last," she said.

Her sister-in-law stood with her thin hands stroking the glossy curls which lay so stirless above the marble forehead, no tears in the clear, deep eyes.

"My boy, my beautiful boy," she murmured, as she bent down to kiss the cold lips. "Heaven has taken you safely from out this storm, which might have been too cruel and hard for such young shoulders. I bow submissively—I bless its decree. I shall come soon, my Ronald, and I have learned to trust to Heaven's mercy and pitiful love."

And much to the amazement of her high-born acquaint-

ances, Lady Mary Falkner bore the untimely death of her only son with serene trust and saintly fortitude.

As soon as seemed proper, the change of owners at Wainwright Slope and Falkner House was made known to the public.

Mr. John Middleton's astonishment and delight may be imagined when he discovered that, after all, a son of his was to reign as master of the old ancestral home.

He dropped his faith in his elder son's smartness, and transferred his pride to Maurice, although Felix had never before so thoroughly deserved his good opinion. Both Octavia and Felix kept their good resolutions, and retained their humbled disposition.

The former hastened to seek out the heiress who had once aroused her anger and resentment, to offer not only her sincere congratulations but her contrition for past injuries. The mutual confession of Felix and Octavia explained the mystery which had so cruelly menaced helpless Will Yarrel. Singularly enough, they had each fallen upon the same plan, and used the same cloak and cap, which had hung so long among the masquerade garments in the old closet of the mansion at Wainwright Slope. Only it had been Octavia who had guessed out the history of Mathew Merle's niece, and acted promptly in her removal; and it was Felix who had rid himself of the unwelcome witness.

Jane West, in her own quiet fashion, accepted half of the Falkner income, and then went her way whither her plans had pointed—first to America, to fit herself to be a worthy physician in Doctor Morley's place. Her letters to Wilhelmine and her husband were faithful chronicles of her daily life. At first she hid her disappointment, but presently the indignation of her heart was made known to them.

"Ah!" wrote she; "this America, free and foremost, as it professes itself, in all liberal ways, has not yet emancipated all its serfs. What

think you! when I seek for the light which the physicians of all lands ask and obtain—the benefit of older experience, of lecture and experiment room, the assistance of organized societies—they put me off. Because I am more ignorant and unpracticed than the other applicants? Nay. I have proved my competence as surgeon and physician. Because my aim is low, my character unworthy? I tell you I have brought certificates of my respectability. I have maintained a true character, as becomes Doctor Morley's pupil. But it is simply this—that I am a woman! I sat, with my whole heart rising in scorn and indignation, the other day, while a circle of grave and learned physicians, themselves taking hold of every aid, lent to them by mutual explanation, and lecture, and society, while they voted down the application of a worthy and successful practitioner, *who was not a man*, for admittance into their society. Do you blush for shame at their brutal selfishness and lordly love of power, as I did, when I tell you they rose in the noble, and dignified, and Christian act, to hurrah and shout their congratulations, because—they had voted a woman out! Is this the liberality, the generous magnanimity, which Doctor Morley taught me to look for in America?

“Dear friends, I am going back to Sydney, to do the best, with the limited means allowed a woman's education, for Doctor Morley's poor convict patients. Heaven bless you with the richest blessings of life! I shall write to you next from my old home in Sydney, where you will hear of a free dispensary at Doctor Morley's house.

“Ever yours in love, JANE.”

I need not say that neither Wilhelmine nor Maurice repented their hurried marriage. Theirs was a noble, genial, and happy home. Lady Mary spent her days with them.

Felix and Octavia were established in the next town, where the former went to work in an energetic and determined manner, which augured well for the fulfillment of the general's prophecy, that he would be the member for that borough come ten years.

It was while on a visit to them that Wilhelmine one day rushed away from the arm of her husband in the midst of a crowded street, and seized upon the hand of a jovial, contented-looking individual in blue clothes, and broad Panama hat.

“Captain Leyard, I am so glad to see you. Come this way and see my friends—I have told them so much about you.”

Captain Lo opened his eyes and stared in amazement.

“I beg your pardon, madam. I really ought not to forget such a face as that, but—but——”

“Oh, Captain Lo, have you forgotten poor Will Yarrel?”

“Holy sailor! Will Yarrel, the poor little fellow! What can you tell me about him?”

“Come this way and my husband will give you the latest intelligence;” and the beautiful Mrs. Wainwright (for Maurice had taken the old name) retreated, laughing and blushing to her husband’s side.

Great was Captain Lo’s amazement, which was deepened to keen delight, when Mrs. Middleton came forward and begged his pardon for the deception practiced upon him.

“Well, well,” he cried again and again. “So here’s the end of the great mystery that has puzzled me so often to look back upon. Who would have thought it?”

“And the end likewise,” added Felix in a tender whisper, stealing a gentle clasp upon the firm, white fingers of his handsome wife, “of Octavia’s Pride.”

[THE END.]

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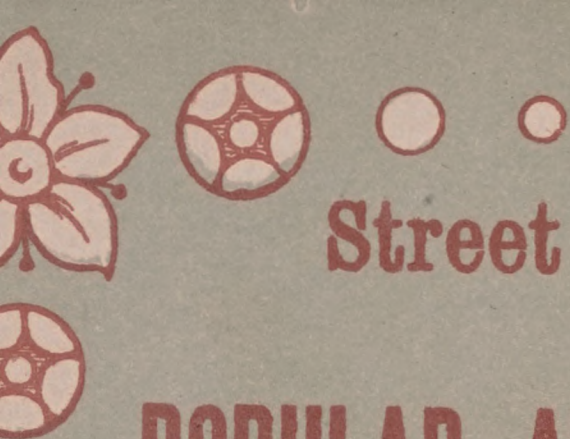
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